

# Public–Private Partnerships as Governance Mechanisms for Sustainable and Resilient Tourism Development: A Structured Literature Review

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**Abstract.** *Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs) have increasingly gained attention within tourism development, particularly in environments shaped by fiscal limitations, growing infrastructure needs, and intensified sustainability challenges. Although existing scholarship frequently evaluates PPPs through perspectives centered on financial efficiency and risk-sharing mechanisms, their broader contribution to sustainable, resilient tourism remains insufficiently clarified both conceptually and empirically. This paper systematically reviews empirical studies to assess how PPP governance tools affect infrastructure delivery, environmental outcomes, and destination resilience.*

*Drawing from literature in public administration, tourism governance, and socio-ecological resilience studies, this review examines main theoretical frameworks, dominant methodological approaches, and identifies critical gaps. The findings reveal that most PPP-related research continues to prioritize economic efficiency and contractual performance, whereas dimensions associated with social inclusion, environmental adaptability, and long-term systemic resilience receive considerably less attention. In addition, empirical studies appear fragmented in methodological terms, while comparative and mixed-method research capable of explaining the influence of public–private collaboration on multidimensional sustainability outcomes remains limited.*

*The review highlights five critical gaps in the literature:*

- 1. Theory gap — governance and sustainability are not integrated;*
- 2. Measurement bias — studies over-rely on economic indicators for evaluation;*
- 3. Methods — few comparative or mixed method studies exist;*
- 4. Context — limited attention to institutional and contextual conditions;*
- 5. Resilience — PPP governance models rarely include resilience principles.*

*By addressing these gaps, the paper argues that PPPs should be understood not solely as financing arrangements, but also as institutional governance mechanisms with the capacity to shape more sustainable, adaptive, and resilient tourism systems.*

*The study contributes to discussions on governance innovation and business excellence by emphasizing the need to develop tools that link partnership design to measurable outcomes, such as reduced energy use, more local jobs, or faster recovery after shocks.*

**Keywords:** Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs); Sustainable tourism development; Tourism governance; Resilience; Collaborative governance; Sustainability performance.

## Introduction

Tourism is widely recognized as a pillar of the global economy. It generates jobs and boosts regional growth, while fostering international interaction. At the same time, the sector relies on environmental and social conditions, making it vulnerable to external shocks and structural changes. Over the last decade, a series of global crises—including economic instability, geopolitical tensions, health emergencies, and climate disruptions—have highlighted this

fragility. Consequently, these events have intensified discussions about transitioning toward more sustainable and resilient development models (Hall et al., 2021; Bramwell & Lane, 2011).

Within this evolving environment, growing attention has been directed toward governance structures that support coordination among public institutions, private actors, and local stakeholders. As tourism systems become more interdependent and complex, this prompted a shift to collaborative, network-style governance that emphasizes shared responsibility and long-term planning.

In this context, PPPs have become increasingly important in tourism development. Although initially associated mainly with infrastructure and public services, PPPs are now applied across tourism-related sectors, including destination management, transport, cultural heritage, and hospitality investment. Their growing relevance is linked to their ability to combine public-sector oversight with private-sector expertise, managerial flexibility, innovation, and financial resources (Grimsey & Lewis, 2002; Hodge & Greve, 2007). As a result, PPPs improve investment capacity and operational efficiency — for example, by jointly funding transport links or coordinating destination marketing.

Despite their expanding application, however, the contribution of PPPs to sustainable and resilient tourism development is still poorly understood. Existing research still focuses primarily on contractual arrangements, efficiency gains, and risk-sharing processes, while broader issues such as environmental sustainability, social inclusion, governance quality, and long-term adaptive capacity receive comparatively limited attention. Consequently, PPPs continue to be evaluated mainly through economic and managerial criteria, even though these tools work within complex tourism systems to influence resilience and sustainability.

In this context, this study looks at PPPs not merely as financial or administrative tools, but as governance arrangements that work within complex tourism systems. The paper examines how PPPs are conceptualized within sustainable tourism development and assesses whether existing governance frameworks adequately incorporate sustainability and resilience perspectives. In addition, the study aims to assess the prevalent methodological approaches in the literature and investigate how future studies can develop integrated governance models for tourism destinations.

More specifically, the study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the conceptualization of PPPs within sustainable tourism governance?

RQ2: What are the primary research methods used to study PPPs in tourism systems?

RQ3: How do existing PPP governance frameworks incorporate sustainability and resilience perspectives?

RQ4: How can future studies develop integrated governance models that connect PPP structures with broader tourism outcomes?

To address these questions, the study adopts a structured literature review methodology. Through a critical examination of the existing body of research, the paper identifies dominant theoretical perspectives, recurring methodological patterns, and key gaps related to PPP governance in tourism. In doing so, the study seeks to contribute to broader discussions on tourism governance and provide a more integrated understanding of how partnership structures may support sustainability and resilience within tourism destinations.

## Methodology

This review uses a structured approach to examine existing PPP research within sustainable tourism development. The design draws on established methods from tourism, business, and

public management to ensure transparency and consistency. Specifically, the study aims to map governance frameworks (e.g., stakeholder theory, network governance), summarize common methods like case studies and surveys, and identify critical gaps, such as the lack of longitudinal evaluations of PPP outcomes.

The review identifies and evaluates academic contributions to sustainability and resilience within tourism PPP governance. To maintain comparability and quality, the analysis focuses exclusively on peer-reviewed scholarly literature.

We searched Scopus and Web of Science using the query (“public-private partnership” OR PPP) AND (“tourism” OR “destination management”) AND (“sustainability” OR “resilience”), covering 2000–2024, and applied backward reference screening to identify additional relevant studies cited in key publications.

To ensure relevance, we established clear inclusion and exclusion criteria at the start. The analysis included peer-reviewed articles, indexed conference proceedings, and scholarly book chapters on PPP governance or tourism sustainability. We excluded non-English publications, opinion-based non-academic works without theoretical or empirical evidence, and studies not related to tourism or public–private partnerships.

We screened 112 publications and, after removing duplicates and assessing abstracts and full texts, narrowed the sample to 27 studies. These studies explicitly focused on tourism PPPs and explored sustainability and resilience. We then used thematic analysis to examine their governance structures, sustainability performance, contractual dimensions, and methodological gaps.

To complement the structured review, we used VOSviewer to conduct a bibliometric analysis of the 27 selected studies. We excluded records lacking sufficient metadata, such as author information or keywords, and mapped co-authorship and keyword co-occurrence networks to identify patterns of collaboration and dominant themes within the literature.

For the keyword analysis, we applied a minimum occurrence threshold to improve the clarity of the visualizations. VOSviewer generated node clusters based on the strength of keyword co-occurrence relationships. Because the dataset is relatively small, the bibliometric analysis mainly supports the thematic interpretation of the literature.

## Literature review

Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs) have gradually evolved into widely used governance arrangements in sectors requiring substantial investment, long-term planning, and coordination among institutional actors. Although PPPs were initially linked mainly to infrastructure delivery and public service provision, their application has expanded considerably within tourism development, including destination management, transport infrastructure, cultural heritage projects, and hospitality investment initiatives.

Within the literature, PPPs are generally understood as long-term collaborations in which public and private actors share responsibilities, risks, resources, and benefits. Researchers have focused mainly on contracts, financing, and risk-sharing as key determinants of partnership performance. However, tourism PPPs operate within more complex institutional and socio-economic settings shaped by environmental conditions, stakeholder coordination, and local development dynamics. As a result, PPPs function both as financing mechanisms and as governance tools embedded within local institutions and territories.

The literature also reveals major gaps in the relationship between PPP governance, sustainable tourism, and resilience. Although these fields have developed strong theoretical

foundations independently, few studies examine whether PPPs can simultaneously improve economic performance, support environmental adaptation, and strengthen long-term tourism resilience.

### ***Theoretical Fragmentation Between PPPs, Sustainability, and Resilience***

One of the clearest weaknesses identified in the literature concerns the limited theoretical integration between PPP governance models, sustainability frameworks, and resilience theory. Although all three fields have developed relatively strong conceptual foundations independently, there is still no widely accepted framework capable of connecting partnership design with measurable sustainability and resilience outcomes within tourism systems.

### ***PPP Theory: Efficiency, Risk Allocation, and Contractual Governance***

The theoretical foundations of PPP research are largely rooted in public administration, institutional economics, and contract theory. Existing studies frequently rely on principal–agent theory, transaction cost economics, and risk-allocation frameworks to explain partnership performance and governance efficiency (Grimsey & Lewis, 2002; Hodge & Greve, 2007; Williamson, 1985). Consequently, PPP effectiveness is often evaluated through indicators associated with financial efficiency, operational performance, and value-for-money considerations (Yescombe, 2007). While these approaches provide important insights into contractual governance, they tend to treat PPPs primarily as technical and financial arrangements, giving less attention to environmental sustainability, institutional adaptability, and social inclusion.

### ***Sustainable Tourism Theory: Normative Multidimensionality***

In contrast, sustainable tourism research has developed through environmental economics, development studies, and stakeholder-oriented governance perspectives. Sustainable tourism is commonly understood through the “triple bottom line” approach, which integrates economic viability, social equity, and environmental protection within tourism development strategies (Elkington, 2001; Bramwell & Lane, 2011). Economic sustainability refers to long-term destination competitiveness; social sustainability requires community participation and equitable benefit-sharing (Scheyvens, 1999); environmental sustainability focuses on responsible resource management and climate adaptation (UNWTO & UNDP, 2017). Despite this strong normative orientation, the literature provides limited explanation of how these principles can be systematically integrated into PPP governance and evaluation frameworks.

### ***Resilience Theory: Adaptation, Transformation, and System Dynamics***

Resilience theory has roots in ecological systems research (Holling, 1973) and has become increasingly important in tourism studies, particularly after financial crises, natural disasters, and the COVID-19 pandemic (Hall, Scott, & Gössling, 2021). Resilience refers to the ability of systems to absorb disturbances, adapt, and continue functioning under changing conditions (Walker et al., 2004). Within tourism governance, resilience perspectives emphasize adaptability and coordination. However, despite growing academic attention, limited research explains how governance tools such as PPP agreements can implement resilience principles within institutions and contracts.

As a result, the relationship between resilience thinking and PPP governance remains underdeveloped in the literature. Existing studies rarely examine how partnership structures

support crisis preparedness, adaptive governance, or sustained transformation in tourism destinations facing growing environmental and economic uncertainty.

### ***Parallel Development and Conceptual Silos***

These three theoretical streams have developed largely in parallel rather than in an integrated way. PPP research treats partnerships as tools for efficiency and risk management; sustainable tourism focuses on economic, social, and environmental outcomes; resilience theory emphasizes adaptability and transformation. Few studies connect these perspectives, creating clear conceptual silos. Table 1 summarizes the dominant focus areas and theoretical limitations across the three streams.

**Table 1. Comparative Overview of Theoretical Streams**

| <b>Theoretical Stream</b> | <b>Core Focus</b>                 | <b>Dominant Concepts</b>                          | <b>Strengths</b>                           | <b>Limitations</b>                      |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| PPP Theory                | Financial efficiency & governance | Risk allocation, principal-agent, value for money | Strong contractual frameworks              | Limited socio-environmental integration |
| Sustainable Tourism       | Multidimensional sustainability   | Triple bottom line, stakeholder theory            | Normative clarity & multidimensional scope | Weak institutional specification        |
| Resilience Theory         | Adaptive capacity & recovery      | System dynamics, transformation, learning         | Dynamic & crisis-oriented perspective      | Limited contractual operationalization  |

Source: Author's synthesis based on (Grimsey & Lewis, 2002; Bramwell & Lane, 2011; Walker et al., 2004).

### ***1.5 Implications of Theoretical Fragmentation***

The absence of a coherent theoretical connection between PPP governance, sustainability, and resilience creates important analytical limitations within the literature. In many cases, PPP arrangements continue to be evaluated primarily through financial and contractual efficiency, while broader sustainability and resilience outcomes remain comparatively underexplored. As a result, partnerships that appear economically successful may still fail to support environmental adaptation or socially balanced tourism development.

This fragmentation is reflected in the different priorities emphasized within each theoretical tradition. PPP governance frameworks generally prioritize risk allocation, financial predictability, and contractual stability, whereas sustainable tourism research focuses more strongly on participation, equity, and environmental protection. At the same time, resilience theory emphasizes adaptability and the capacity to respond to disruption, although it pays less attention to the structural rigidity often associated with long-term contractual arrangements.

One of the central tensions identified in the literature therefore concerns the relationship between contractual stability and adaptive flexibility. PPP agreements are typically designed to reduce uncertainty through clearly defined responsibilities and long-term risk-sharing mechanisms. However, tourism systems increasingly operate under conditions shaped by climate change, economic instability, geopolitical uncertainty, and public health crises. Under such circumstances, governance arrangements based excessively on fixed contractual structures may struggle to respond effectively to unforeseen disruptions.

The literature consequently points toward the need for stronger theoretical integration capable of reconciling long-term contractual stability with adaptive governance capacity. Addressing these limitations requires a more integrated analytical framework that approaches

PPPs not solely as financing arrangements, but as institutional governance mechanisms connecting sustainability objectives with resilience outcomes within tourism systems. Such an approach would require closer integration between contractual design, stakeholder accountability, environmental performance requirements, and adaptive governance mechanisms capable of responding to long-term uncertainty.

Importantly, these governance dimensions should be linked to measurable sustainability and resilience indicators related to environmental performance, social inclusion, institutional adaptability, and long-term destination viability. Although recent tourism governance research increasingly emphasizes interdisciplinary and systems-oriented approaches (Hall et al., 2021), empirical frameworks capable of operationalizing these relationships remain relatively limited.

### ***Overemphasis on Financial Efficiency and Underrepresentation of Social and Environmental Dimensions***

A second major issue identified in the literature concerns the continued dominance of financial and economic evaluation criteria within PPP assessment frameworks. Although economic viability and efficient resource allocation remain important considerations for both public authorities and private investors, tourism systems are inherently multidimensional and cannot be adequately evaluated through financial indicators alone.

The strong emphasis on economic efficiency largely reflects the origins of PPP research in infrastructure economics and public finance. Consequently, partnership performance is frequently assessed through indicators associated with value-for-money performance, operational efficiency, return on investment, and risk transfer optimization (Grimsey & Lewis, 2002; Yescombe, 2007). While such indicators provide important insight into economic feasibility, they offer a relatively narrow understanding of tourism development outcomes, particularly in destinations where social cohesion and environmental quality are central to long-term competitiveness.

Social sustainability remains one of the least developed dimensions within PPP-related tourism research. Existing studies acknowledge the importance of community participation, equitable distribution of benefits, local empowerment, and cultural preservation (Scheyvens, 1999), yet these dimensions are only partially incorporated into most PPP governance and evaluation frameworks. Participation mechanisms are often consultative rather than institutionally binding, while social objectives frequently depend on voluntary initiatives rather than formal accountability structures (Hall, 2011).

Similarly, employment-related evaluations tend to focus primarily on the number of jobs created rather than on employment quality, labor stability, or long-term community resilience. As a result, broader social and environmental dimensions continue to receive less systematic attention within many PPP governance models despite their importance for sustainable tourism development.

### ***Environmental Sustainability as Secondary Consideration***

Environmental sustainability represents another area that remains insufficiently integrated within the PPP literature. Tourism infrastructure projects, including airports, ports, hotels, transport systems, and large-scale resort developments, can generate substantial environmental pressure on local ecosystems and natural resources. At the same time, climate change continues to intensify tourism vulnerabilities through sea-level rise, biodiversity degradation, water scarcity, and extreme weather events (UNWTO & UNDP, 2017).

Although environmental impact assessments are commonly required during the planning stages of tourism projects, the literature suggests that long-term environmental governance mechanisms are less consistently embedded within PPP structures. Environmental clauses included in partnership agreements often focus primarily on compliance with existing regulations rather than on continuous environmental improvement or adaptive management practices.

Research on sustainable tourism management increasingly emphasizes the importance of carrying-capacity monitoring, renewable energy integration, waste-management systems, and climate adaptation strategies (Bramwell & Lane, 2011). However, these principles are only rarely translated into contractual incentives linked to measurable environmental performance outcomes.

The absence of performance-based environmental governance mechanisms within many PPP agreements represents a significant structural limitation. In practice, environmental sustainability frequently remains peripheral to core partnership evaluation criteria, despite its central importance for the long-term viability and resilience of tourism destinations.

### ***Empirical Evidence of Imbalanced Evaluation***

Table 2 provides a comparative synthesis of dominant evaluation criteria across PPP tourism studies.

**Table 2. Dominant Evaluation Criteria in PPP Tourism Research**

| <b>Dimension</b> | <b>Common Indicators Used</b>                       | <b>Degree of Representation in Literature</b> | <b>Identified Gap</b>                                 |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Economic         | Revenue growth, tourist arrivals, ROI, cost savings | High                                          | Overemphasis on short-term financial metrics          |
| Social           | Employment numbers, CSR initiatives                 | Moderate                                      | Limited focus on equity, participation, labor quality |
| Environmental    | Regulatory compliance, EIA approval                 | Low–Moderate                                  | Lack of adaptive monitoring & performance incentives  |
| Resilience       | Recovery speed post-crisis                          | Emerging                                      | Limited integration into PPP contractual design       |

Source: Author’s synthesis based on (Grimsey & Lewis, 2002; Bramwell & Lane, 2011; Hall, 2011).

The table illustrates that economic metrics dominate performance evaluations, while environmental and social indicators are either weakly operationalized or treated as supplementary. Resilience indicators, although increasingly discussed in post-pandemic literature (Hall, Scott, & Gössling, 2021), remain insufficiently embedded in PPP performance measurement systems.

### ***Structural Reasons for Imbalance***

The literature suggests that the persistent emphasis on financial efficiency within PPP evaluation frameworks is not accidental, but rather linked to a number of structural and institutional factors. One important explanation concerns the relative ease with which economic indicators can be quantified and incorporated into contractual monitoring systems. Financial variables such as investment returns, operational costs, revenue generation, and risk allocation can generally be measured through standardized metrics. In contrast, social cohesion, environmental adaptability, and community well-being are considerably more complex, context-specific, and

multidimensional, making them more difficult to translate into clear contractual obligations or measurable performance indicators.

A second factor relates to political and institutional priorities. In many tourism development strategies, visible economic expansion tends to receive greater policy attention than long-term sustainability objectives. Large-scale infrastructure projects often generate immediate economic benefits, including employment opportunities, investment inflows, and increased tourism revenues. By comparison, the benefits associated with environmental protection or social resilience typically emerge more gradually and are therefore less visible within short political cycles.

The literature also points to the role of investor incentives within PPP structures. Private actors participating in partnership arrangements may perceive environmental obligations or social commitments primarily as additional operational costs unless governance frameworks explicitly connect such objectives to long-term value creation. In the absence of performance-based incentives or accountability mechanisms, sustainability dimensions can become secondary to financial performance targets.

These structural dynamics contribute to the continued prioritization of economic efficiency within PPP governance and help explain why social and environmental dimensions remain comparatively underdeveloped in both theory and practice.

### ***Implications for Research and Governance***

The strong concentration on financial performance indicators has important implications for both academic research and tourism governance practice. Although economic efficiency remains a necessary component of PPP evaluation, an overly narrow focus on fiscal outcomes limits the ability to understand the broader consequences of partnership arrangements within tourism systems.

More specifically, governance frameworks that fail to integrate social and environmental dimensions risk encouraging development models centered primarily on short-term growth rather than long-term sustainability. Partnerships may succeed in mobilizing investment and improving infrastructure while simultaneously contributing to environmental degradation, social inequality, or increased vulnerability to future crises.

From a research perspective, this imbalance highlights the need for broader and more multidimensional evaluation frameworks capable of incorporating governance quality, social inclusion, ecological performance, and adaptive capacity alongside traditional economic indicators. Existing literature still lacks sufficiently integrated models that can assess how PPP structures influence the overall sustainability trajectory of tourism destinations.

Overall, the findings suggest that financial efficiency, while essential, should not remain the dominant criterion through which PPP success is assessed. A more balanced governance perspective is required one capable of capturing the interconnected economic, social, and environmental dimensions that shape sustainable and resilient tourism development.

### **Methodological Limitations and Lack of Comparative Evidence**

Another important gap identified in the literature concerns methodological fragmentation and the limited availability of comparative empirical evidence regarding PPPs in sustainable tourism development. Although conceptual discussions surrounding governance, sustainability, and resilience have expanded considerably, empirical research within the field remains uneven in

both design and methodological scope. This situation limits the broader comparability of findings and constrains the development of cumulative knowledge across different tourism contexts.

### ***Predominance of Single-Case Studies***

A substantial proportion of the existing literature relies on qualitative single-case study approaches. Case-based research offers valuable insight into local governance processes, stakeholder interaction, institutional dynamics, and contextual complexity (Yin, 2018). Within tourism research, these approaches are particularly useful because tourism destinations function as highly embedded socio-economic systems shaped by unique environmental, cultural, and political conditions.

At the same time, however, the strong dependence on isolated case studies creates limitations regarding generalizability and comparative understanding. Many studies examine individual destinations or projects without systematically comparing governance structures, institutional conditions, or sustainability outcomes across cases.

Although comparative case-study methodology has long been recognized as theoretically valuable for identifying broader governance patterns (George & Bennett, 2005), it remains relatively underutilized within PPP tourism research. Consequently, there is still limited evidence regarding the conditions under which PPP arrangements contribute positively to sustainability and resilience, as opposed to situations where they may reinforce existing structural vulnerabilities.

### ***Limited Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches***

A further methodological weakness concerns the limited integration between quantitative and qualitative forms of analysis. Quantitative studies within tourism PPP research often focus on measurable economic indicators, including tourism revenues, visitor arrivals, occupancy levels, infrastructure investment, or regional growth rates (Dwyer et al., 2020). While these indicators provide important evidence regarding economic performance, they offer less insight into governance quality, institutional trust, stakeholder relations, or adaptive capacity.

In contrast, qualitative research tends to focus more heavily on governance processes, institutional coordination, stakeholder participation, and negotiation dynamics within partnership arrangements (Hodge & Greve, 2007). Such studies frequently provide rich contextual understanding, yet they often lack standardized indicators or comparative measurement frameworks that would allow findings to be systematically compared across different settings.

Mixed-method approaches combining quantitative performance analysis with qualitative governance assessment remain relatively uncommon within the tourism PPP literature. Nevertheless, the integration of these approaches appears increasingly necessary for understanding the multidimensional nature of partnership performance (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Without methodological triangulation, the explanatory depth and robustness of empirical findings remain limited.

This methodological gap further reinforces the need for more integrative research designs capable of combining qualitative synthesis with quantitative mapping and comparative analysis, particularly in studies examining sustainability and resilience dimensions within tourism governance.

### ***Inconsistent Measurement of Sustainability and Resilience***

Another methodological challenge concerns the inconsistent operationalization of sustainability and resilience indicators across the literature. Economic variables are generally easier to

standardize and compare across destinations. However, social sustainability dimensions, including community cohesion, trust, participation, and equitable distribution of benefits, remain considerably more difficult to measure in a consistent manner (Scheyvens, 1999).

The measurement of resilience introduces additional complexity. Existing studies refer to resilience through a wide variety of indicators, including crisis recovery speed, employment stabilization, diversification of tourism markets, institutional learning capacity, and governance adaptability (Hall, Scott, & Gössling, 2021). Yet these dimensions are rarely incorporated into unified analytical frameworks capable of assessing resilience systematically across projects or destinations.

As a result, resilience has become highly visible at the conceptual level but remains comparatively underdeveloped from an empirical and methodological perspective. The absence of commonly accepted resilience indicators makes it difficult to compare findings across studies or evaluate the long-term adaptive performance of PPP governance arrangements.

### ***Short-Term Evaluation Bias***

A further limitation identified in the literature relates to the predominance of short- and medium-term evaluation frameworks. Many PPP assessments focus primarily on immediate project outcomes, including construction timelines, cost control, operational efficiency, and early-stage revenue generation. While such indicators are important for assessing project implementation, they provide only a partial understanding of long-term sustainability outcomes.

Processes associated with tourism resilience and sustainability often emerge gradually over extended periods. Environmental degradation, social displacement, institutional learning, and adaptive governance capacities typically develop through long-term interactions rather than short-term project cycles (Bramwell & Lane, 2011).

The absence of long-term longitudinal datasets therefore represents a major methodological limitation. Without sustained observation over time, it remains difficult to determine whether PPP arrangements contribute to genuine adaptive capacity and long-term destination resilience or simply provide temporary economic stabilization during specific development phases.

### ***Overview of Methodological Imbalances***

Table 3 synthesizes dominant methodological patterns and corresponding limitations.

**Table 3. Methodological Patterns in PPP Tourism Research**

| <b>Methodological Approach</b>  | <b>Strengths</b>                     | <b>Limitations</b>           | <b>Identified Gap</b>                       |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Single-case qualitative studies | Contextual depth; governance insight | Limited generalization       | Lack of cross-case comparison               |
| Quantitative economic analysis  | Measurable impact; financial clarity | Narrow economic focus        | Insufficient socio-environmental indicators |
| Cross-sectional surveys         | Stakeholder perceptions              | Subjective bias              | Limited longitudinal dimension              |
| Longitudinal studies            | Dynamic analysis                     | Rare in PPP tourism research | Limited crisis-based datasets               |
| Mixed-method research           | Triangulation potential              | Underutilized                | Need for integrated designs                 |

Source: Author's synthesis based on (Yin, 2018; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Hall et al., 2021).

The table highlights a clear structural imbalance in research design, where qualitative governance insights are prevalent, while systematic comparative and longitudinal frameworks remain limited.

### ***Institutional Heterogeneity and Contextual Variability***

The methodological limitations identified in the literature become even more pronounced when considering the institutional diversity that characterizes PPP governance across different countries and tourism systems. Partnership structures are shaped by a wide range of contextual factors, including legal traditions, regulatory frameworks, procurement procedures, governance cultures, and levels of administrative capacity (Hodge & Greve, 2007). As a result, PPP arrangements that function effectively in one institutional setting may not necessarily produce similar outcomes elsewhere.

This variability complicates direct comparison between studies and often limits the development of standardized evaluation frameworks. Differences in governance systems, accountability mechanisms, public-sector capabilities, and political priorities can significantly influence the implementation and long-term performance of tourism-related PPPs. Consequently, empirical findings derived from one national or regional context cannot always be generalized across broader tourism systems.

At the same time, however, institutional diversity also creates important opportunities for comparative research. Examining similar PPP models across different governance environments may help identify the contextual conditions under which partnerships are more likely to support sustainability and resilience objectives. Comparative analysis can therefore contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how institutional arrangements shape governance effectiveness and partnership outcomes.

Such comparative approaches, however, require stronger methodological consistency than is currently evident in much of the literature. Cross-contextual research depends on the use of clearer conceptual definitions, comparable indicators, and more rigorous analytical frameworks capable of capturing both institutional differences and shared governance patterns.

### ***Implications for Future Research***

The methodological limitations discussed above highlight the need for more integrated and analytically robust approaches within future PPP tourism research. In response to part of this gap, the present study combines a structured literature review with bibliometric analysis in an effort to provide a more systematic overview of existing research patterns and conceptual tendencies.

Nevertheless, the broader literature suggests that several methodological shifts remain necessary if the field is to progress beyond predominantly descriptive analysis.

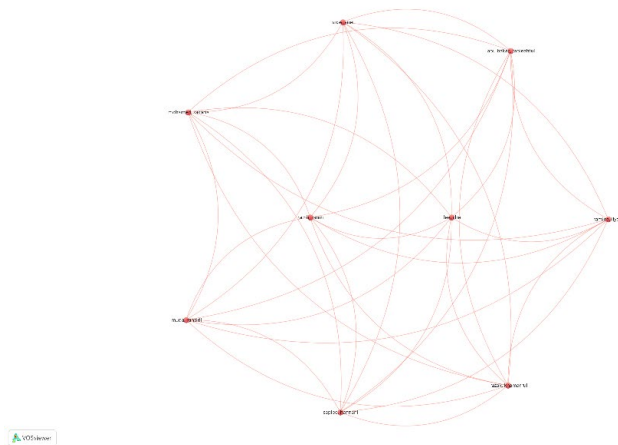
First, there is a clear need for a greater number of comparative case-study designs examining PPP governance across different institutional and geographical contexts. Comparative research can help clarify the conditions under which partnership structures contribute positively to sustainability and resilience outcomes, while also identifying the contextual factors that constrain governance effectiveness.

Second, future studies would benefit from stronger integration between quantitative and qualitative approaches. Mixed-method frameworks combining measurable performance indicators with in-depth governance analysis are particularly important for understanding the multidimensional nature of tourism partnerships. Economic outcomes alone cannot adequately

capture issues such as institutional trust, stakeholder coordination, adaptive capacity, or community participation.

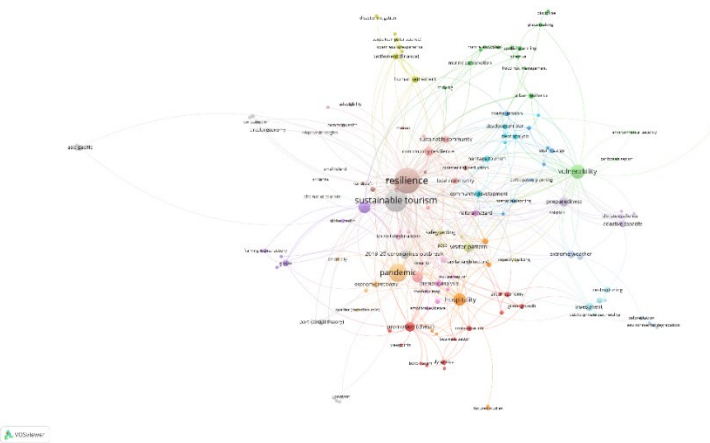
Third, resilience concepts require more systematic operationalization within empirical research. Although resilience is frequently discussed as a desirable governance objective, existing studies rarely translate it into measurable variables that can be incorporated into partnership evaluation frameworks. Developing clearer resilience indicators would improve analytical comparability and strengthen the empirical assessment of adaptive governance within tourism PPPs.

Without these methodological developments, research on PPPs in tourism risks remaining fragmented and primarily descriptive in character. More rigorous comparative evidence is essential for explaining how governance design influences sustainable and resilient tourism outcomes across diverse institutional settings and development contexts.



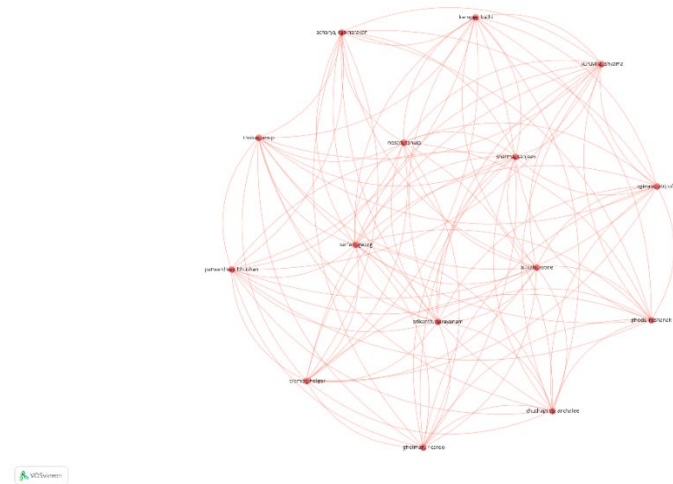
**Figure 1: Co-authorship network in PPP resilience tourism research**

Source: VOSviewer.



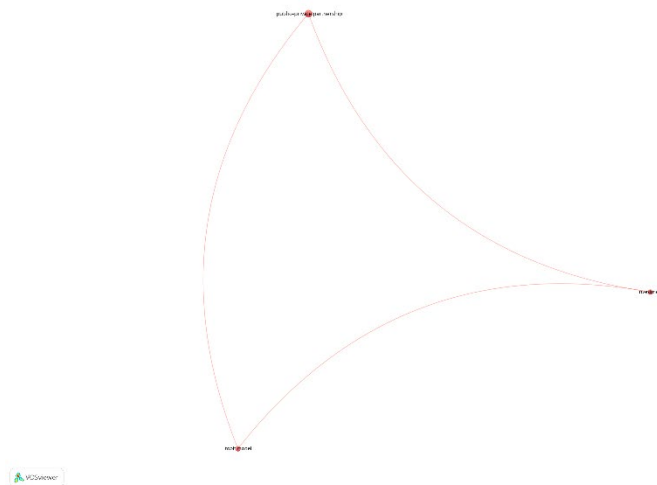
**Figure 2: Keyword co-occurrence network in PPP tourism research**

Source: VOSviewer.



**Figure 3: Co-authorship network in broader resilient tourism research**

Source: VOSviewer.



**Figure 4: Keyword co-occurrence network in resilient tourism literature**

Source: VOSviewer.

### **Bibliometric Network Analysis (Figures 1–4)**

Figures 1–4 present VOSviewer bibliometric visualizations illustrating co-authorship and keyword co-occurrence networks in the field of resilient tourism development, with particular emphasis on public–private partnerships (PPPs).

#### ***Co-authorship Structures (Figures 1 and 3)***

Figure 1 depicts the co-authorship network for research explicitly focused on resilient tourism development through PPPs. The structure reveals a relatively small but highly interconnected cluster of authors. The dense internal linkages suggest strong collaboration within a limited research group, while the absence of multiple distinct clusters indicates that the field remains concentrated rather than broadly diffused across international research communities. The lack of bridging nodes connecting separate clusters implies limited cross-disciplinary or cross-regional

integration. This configuration is typical of emerging research niches where scholarly collaboration is still consolidating.

In contrast, Figure 3 illustrates the broader co-authorship network in resilient tourism development research. This network is substantially larger and more complex, with numerous authors connected through dense interrelations. The higher degree of connectivity and the absence of clearly isolated clusters suggest a mature and well-integrated research field. Collaboration appears more diversified, indicating that resilience in tourism has evolved into a recognized interdisciplinary domain involving environmental studies, economics, governance, and disaster management. Compared to Figure 1, the PPP-specific resilience subfield appears narrower and less institutionally embedded within the wider scholarly community.

### ***Keyword Co-occurrence Patterns (Figures 2 and 4)***

Figure 2 presents the keyword co-occurrence network for resilient tourism development through PPPs. The visualization is structurally sparse and organized around a limited number of central nodes, notably “public-private partnership,” “investment,” and “tourism model.” The triangular configuration indicates conceptual concentration rather than thematic diversification. Governance and financial structuring appear as dominant analytical lenses, while broader resilience-related terms—such as “adaptive capacity” or “community resilience”—are less prominent. This suggests that PPP-oriented research in resilient tourism tends to emphasize financial mechanisms and structural modeling rather than multidimensional sustainability outcomes.

By contrast, Figure 4 demonstrates a highly complex and multi-clustered keyword network representing the broader resilient tourism literature. Central nodes such as “resilience,” “sustainable tourism,” and “pandemic” occupy dominant positions, acting as thematic hubs. Several distinct clusters are visible:

- A climate and environmental cluster (e.g., “vulnerability,” “extreme weather,” “urban resilience”).
- A community and governance cluster (e.g., “community resilience,” “disaster risk reduction”).
- An economic recovery cluster (e.g., “hospitality,” “green growth,” “investment”).
- A pandemic-driven cluster reflecting COVID-19’s impact on tourism systems.

The central positioning of “pandemic” confirms the transformative role of COVID-19 in reshaping resilience scholarship. The integration of sustainability, disaster management, and governance terms indicates thematic maturity and conceptual expansion.

### ***Comparative Interpretation***

Comparing Figures 1–4 reveals three principal insights. First, resilient tourism research (Figure 3 and Figure 4) is well-established and conceptually diversified. Second, PPP-focused resilience research (Figure 1 and Figure 2) remains more concentrated and financially oriented. Third, governance mechanisms such as PPPs appear peripheral in the broader resilience discourse, suggesting under-integration of institutional design within adaptive tourism frameworks.

Three major structural insights emerge:

1. The resilience field is mature and multi-dimensional, integrating environmental, economic, and social themes.
2. PPP-focused resilience research remains narrower and financially oriented, with limited thematic diversity.

3. Pandemic-driven scholarship has reshaped the intellectual landscape, strengthening connections between sustainability and adaptive governance.

The relative peripheral positioning of “public-private partnership” within the broader resilience network suggests that PPP governance has not yet become a central analytical pillar of resilient tourism discourse.

## Implications

The bibliometric visualizations further support the broader findings of the literature review. Although research on resilient tourism development has expanded considerably and now draws from multiple academic disciplines, the governance dimension—and especially the role of Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs)—still appears relatively underdeveloped within the wider knowledge structure. Themes related to sustainability, vulnerability, crisis recovery, and adaptation are strongly represented across the literature. By contrast, governance-oriented dimensions such as contractual flexibility, institutional coordination, adaptive investment models, and risk-sharing arrangements occupy a far less central position within the bibliometric networks.

This imbalance suggests that resilience research in tourism continues to focus primarily on system outcomes and vulnerability management, while paying less attention to the institutional processes through which resilience is actually implemented and maintained over time. In other words, the broader resilience debate often emphasizes what tourism systems should achieve, but gives comparatively less attention to how governance structures and partnership arrangements contribute to these outcomes in practice.

The findings therefore point to an important opportunity for both theoretical and empirical development through stronger integration between governance theory, partnership frameworks, and resilience-oriented tourism research. A closer connection between these fields could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how institutional design, stakeholder coordination, and partnership structures influence the long-term adaptability and sustainability of tourism systems operating under conditions of uncertainty and disruption.

## *Discussion and Implications*

The findings of this study provide a broader understanding of the role of Public–Private Partnerships as governance mechanisms within sustainable and resilient tourism development. By systematically reviewing the literature and identifying both conceptual and methodological limitations, the study contributes to ongoing discussions surrounding tourism governance, institutional adaptation, and sustainability-oriented development models.

## *Theoretical Contribution*

This study contributes to the literature in three main ways. First, it helps bridge the theoretical divide between PPP governance research and the broader sustainability and resilience literature, areas that have often developed separately despite their strong conceptual connections. Second, the review highlights the methodological fragmentation that continues to characterize PPP tourism research, particularly the limited use of comparative and mixed-method approaches. Third, the study reframes PPPs not simply as financial instruments or infrastructure arrangements, but as institutional governance mechanisms that may influence long-term sustainability and resilience outcomes within tourism systems.

### ***Policy Implications***

The review also carries several implications for tourism governance and public policy. The findings indicate that many existing PPP frameworks still prioritize financial efficiency, investment mobilization, and risk allocation, while giving comparatively less attention to social sustainability, environmental adaptation, and resilience-building processes.

From a policy perspective, this suggests the need for more balanced partnership frameworks capable of integrating sustainability considerations directly into governance and contractual arrangements. Environmental performance indicators, social inclusion criteria, and adaptive governance provisions could be incorporated more systematically into PPP design and evaluation processes instead of being treated as secondary objectives.

The findings further suggest that stronger stakeholder participation mechanisms may improve both the legitimacy and long-term effectiveness of tourism partnerships. More inclusive governance arrangements involving local communities, public institutions, and private-sector actors could strengthen institutional trust and improve the adaptive capacity of tourism systems facing increasing environmental and economic uncertainty.

In addition, closer coordination between public and private actors appears essential for supporting long-term strategic planning rather than focusing only on short-term project implementation. This becomes particularly important in tourism destinations exposed to climate-related risks, economic instability, and changing patterns of global mobility.

### ***Future Research Directions***

The gaps identified throughout the review also point toward several priorities for future research.

One important direction involves the development of comparative cross-national studies examining PPP governance across different institutional and regulatory environments. Research of this kind could improve understanding of how contextual conditions shape sustainability and resilience outcomes within tourism partnerships.

A second priority concerns the wider adoption of mixed-method research approaches. Combining quantitative performance indicators with qualitative governance analysis would provide a more comprehensive understanding of partnership effectiveness and help researchers capture dimensions that are difficult to evaluate through economic metrics alone.

Finally, future research would benefit from a clearer operationalization of sustainability and resilience concepts within PPP evaluation frameworks. Although both concepts are widely discussed throughout the literature, they often remain difficult to measure consistently in empirical research. Developing more coherent indicators related to adaptive governance, social resilience, environmental performance, and institutional flexibility could strengthen future analytical models and improve comparability across studies.

### ***Conclusion***

This study examined the role of Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs) as governance mechanisms within sustainable and resilient tourism development through a structured literature review approach. The findings demonstrate that although PPPs have become increasingly important in tourism governance and destination development, the existing literature continues to focus primarily on financial efficiency, contractual performance, and investment-related outcomes. By contrast, social sustainability, environmental adaptability, and long-term resilience dimensions remain comparatively underdeveloped both conceptually and empirically.

The review identified several important gaps within the literature. First, the relationship between PPP governance, sustainability frameworks, and resilience theory remains theoretically fragmented, with limited integration across these research streams. Second, existing evaluation models continue to prioritize economic indicators, while social inclusion, environmental performance, and adaptive governance mechanisms receive less systematic attention. Third, methodological limitations, including the dominance of single-case studies and the limited use of comparative and mixed-method approaches, restrict broader generalization and comparative understanding across tourism systems.

The study contributes to the literature by reframing PPPs not only as financial or infrastructural arrangements, but also as institutional governance mechanisms capable of influencing the long-term sustainability and resilience of tourism destinations. In addition, the findings highlight the need for more integrated governance frameworks connecting partnership structures with measurable sustainability and resilience outcomes.

From a practical perspective, the study suggests that future tourism PPPs should incorporate stronger environmental, social, and adaptive governance provisions within their contractual and institutional design. More inclusive stakeholder participation, long-term strategic coordination, and resilience-oriented governance mechanisms may strengthen the capacity of tourism destinations to respond to increasing environmental, economic, and geopolitical uncertainty.

The study is subject to certain limitations. As a structured literature review, the analysis relies exclusively on secondary data and published academic research. Furthermore, the bibliometric analysis was conducted on a relatively limited dataset, which restricts the possibility of broader statistical generalization. Future research could expand the empirical basis through comparative cross-national studies, longitudinal analysis, and mixed-method approaches capable of examining the relationship between PPP governance structures and long-term tourism resilience outcomes in greater depth.

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