Enhancing resilience in tourism destination assemblages through smart governance

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Keywords | Tourism resilience, complexity in tourism, socio-ecological assemblages, cross-scale governance, smart decision-making

Objectives | This research introduces various epistemological dimensions of resilience to address the challenge of tourism destinations facing the existing lack of consensus and the various contrasting viewpoints considered in the resilience field. The paper aims to emphasize the complexity of tourism destinations as multiplicities in which people, nature, economy, and politics are interconnected within a single socio-ecological assemblage (Cheer and Lew, 2018; Jovicic, 2019; Hartman, 2021). It highlights that destinations are intricate socio-ecological assemblages where various elements are interconnected and cannot be studied in isolation (Hall, 2018). The paper suggests a different approach to governance structures (Hartman, 2018) that emphasizes adaptive governance to encourage the emergence of well-coordinated tourism and non-tourism components at destinations (Briassoulis, 2017; Lew et al., 2017; McKercher, 1999). In this context, governance structures that consider resilience across scales and sectors become crucial for anticipating changes and making resilient decisions (Hartman, 2018; Amore et al., 2018).

Methodology | The paper begins with a comprehensive literature review aimed at identifying existing debates, perspectives, and gaps in the understanding of resilience in tourism. It then develops a conceptual framework that integrates concepts from various sources, including socio-ecological assemblages, panarchy, adaptive governance, and smart technology. To achieve this, the authors argue for the establishment of a tourism intelligence system that utilizes big data technology and both quantitative and qualitative indicators. This system enables the prediction of various scenarios (Gibson and Tarrant, 2010; Kitchin et al., 2015), paving the way for the formulation of pro-resilient decisions. These decisions consider the entire elements of the socio-ecological assemblage and their interactions from a multi-scalar holistic perspective (Getimis, 2012).

Main Results and Contributions | This paper seeks a significant contribution by providing a comprehensive conceptual understanding of resilience in social-ecological tourism assemblages. It

achieves this by expanding resilience to encompass ecological, social, political, and economic dimensions, offering a more holistic perspective. Additionally, the paper introduces a new governance approach emphasizing adaptability and coordination across tourism destination components. Furthermore, the proposal of a tourism intelligence system utilizing smart technology offers a practical solution for tracking scenarios and making informed, pro-resilient decisions. By considering resilience across different scales and sectors, the paper underscores the importance of a multi-scalar governance approach in tourism destinations. Importantly, the paper's insights have potential policy implications. It advocates for changes in governance structures and the implementation of technological systems to enhance the resilience of tourism destinations.

Limitations | The conceptual model proposed is not substantiated through direct testing or validation in a real-world context. Consequently, there exists a compelling need for further empirical research to ascertain the practical applicability of these theoretical constructs. Hence, it is imperative to complement this conceptual work with empirical investigations in the future, to ensure that the theoretical foundations are robust and have tangible implications in practical settings.

Conclusions | The evolution of resilience within the tourism sector signifies a paradigmatic shift from a narrow economic-centric orientation to a comprehensive, interrelated perspective. This departure from the conventional trajectory of returning to equilibrium post-disturbance underscores the imperative for a continuous state of adaptive flux. However, extant governance frameworks manifest inherent deficiencies in addressing these intricate dynamics, often exhibiting fragmentation across scales and domains. The theoretical underpinning of assemblage theory proffers an integrative framework that accords equal valuation to all constituent elements, thereby advocating for a mode of governance characterized by adaptability. The effective stewardship of tourist destinations as "multiplicities" mandates a nuanced, malleable approach. Implementing governance structures that are both multi-tiered and multi-sectoral, guided by meta-governance principles. Within this context, the incorporation of smart tourism strategies, underpinned by the integration of open data and technological facets, assumes a pivotal role in augmenting resilience.

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