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ADVANCING DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF
COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM THROUGH A
PUBLIC – PRIVATE – COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP MODEL

Destination stewardship has emerged as a critical paradigm for ensuring that tourism development contributes positively to environmental integrity, cultural preservation, and community wellbeing. However, achieving such balanced outcomes requires governance systems that move beyond traditional public–private cooperation toward more inclusive and participatory models. This study explores the role of Public–Private–Community Partnerships (PPCPs) in advancing destination stewardship through community-based tourism (CBT). The analysis is grounded in stakeholder theory, collaborative governance, and sustainable development perspectives, positioning PPCPs as a tripartite mechanism that aligns regulatory authority, market-based efficiency, and endogenous community knowledge within destination management processes. The study employs a qualitative, participatory research design supported by multi-stakeholder co-creation workshops and thematic analysis to examine how collaboration among governments, tourism enterprises, and local communities influences CBT outcomes. The findings indicate that PPCPs strengthen stewardship capacity through more inclusive decision architectures, enhanced social capital formation, and improved distributional equity in tourism benefits. Community actors emerge as critical custodians of cultural and environmental resources, while public institutions provide institutional coherence and private actors introduce operational efficiency and investment mobilisation. The study advances a conceptual model that positions PPCPs as an intermediary governance layer between CBT practice and destination stewardship outcomes. The results suggest that PPCPs contribute to greater systemic efficiency, resilience, and socio-economic coherence within destinations, offering a governance pathway for sustainable and regenerative tourism development.

Keywords: Public-Private-Community Partnership, community-based tourism, destination stewardship, sustainable tourism development, collaborative governance

Introduction

Tourism destinations worldwide are grappling with the need to balance visitor growth with the wellbeing of host communities and the environment. The concept of destination stewardship has emerged as a response, emphasizing that tourism must be managed in a way that makes destinations better places to live and visit [16]. Destination stewardship is defined as “a process by which local communities, governmental agencies, NGOs, and the tourism industry take a multi-stakeholder approach to maintaining the cultural, environmental, economic, and aesthetic integrity of their place” [5]. In essence, it is the continuous pursuit of a net positive tourism ecosystem aligned with shared community values, ensuring positive experiences for both residents and visitors.

Public–Private–Community Partnerships (PPCPs) represent an evolution of the traditional public-private partnership (PPP) model to explicitly include local communities as key partners in tourism planning and development. Conventional PPPs in tourism have often focused on government and industry cooperation but have not always involved the active participation of resident communities [1]. This omission can lead to misaligned priorities, social friction, and missed opportunities for inclusive development. In contrast, PPCPs seek to optimize value for host communities alongside economic and environmental objectives [2]. Around the world, policymakers and international bodies are calling for tourism development models that embed communities at the core. The G20s “AIU1a Framework for Inclusive Community Development through Tourism” explicitly advocates a tourism model based on public-private-community partnerships, organized around pillars of empowerment, safeguarding, prosperity, and collaboration [15].

In this context, community-based tourism (CBT) has gained prominence as a pathway to destination stewardship. CBT is generally defined as tourism owned and managed by local communities, aiming to deliver sustainable livelihoods while conserving cultural and natural resources [9]. Prior studies and reports highlight several stewardship advantages of CBT, particularly its capacity to encourage inclusive economic growth, strengthen cultural heritage preservation, and enhance environmental sustainability. Through placing local communities at the center of tourism planning and operations, CBT promotes equitable benefit-sharing and empowers marginalized groups through employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. In addition, participatory governance within CBT frameworks improves decision-making processes and supports long-term destination resilience. Empirical evidence also suggests that CBT contributes to poverty reduction and sustainable livelihood creation, aligning closely with broader sustainable development objectives [12]. The role of PPCPs in advancing destination stewardship is thus a critical area of inquiry. Through uniting public authorities, private sector expertise, and community knowledge, PPCPs can address complex sustainability challenges that no single actor could solve alone [14]. Public agencies contribute enabling policies, regulatory frameworks, infrastructure provision, and institutional oversight, while private sector actors provide investment capital, innovation capacity, and access to global markets. At the same time, local communities offer place-based knowledge, stewardship of natural and cultural resources, and authentic hospitality experiences. When these stakeholders are effectively coordinated through collaborative governance mechanisms, such partnerships enhance destination resilience, improve resource efficiency, and ensure that tourism development aligns with the socio-economic aspirations of communities [4].

Importance of the study: Despite growing recognition of PPCPs, there remains a gap in academic literature on how these tripartite collaborations specifically contribute to sustainable destination management and CBT success. Much of the existing research on tourism partnerships focuses on public-private arrangements or community-based initiatives in isolation, rather than examining the intersection of all three sectors. This study aims to fill that gap by analyzing the dynamics of PPCPs across diverse contexts and distilling lessons for effective destination stewardship. There is an urgent practical need for frameworks that help integrate community voices in tourism decision-making, thereby avoiding a return to unsustainable “business as usual” practices that led to problems like overtourism and community backlash in the past.

Research objectives: This paper pursues several interrelated objectives: (1) to analyze global research trends on CBT, PPCP, and destination stewardship; (2) to conceptualize the role of PPCPs in encouraging destination stewardship and sustainable CBT; (3) to develop a conceptual model that integrates PPCPs, CBT, and destination stewardship; and (4) to formulate strategic recommendations for policymakers and destination managers.

Main Part

Destination stewardship signifies a paradigm shift from viewing destination management purely as marketing and promotion to viewing it as guardianship of the destination's assets for future generations. This involves ensuring that tourism development is continually aligned with the long-term interests of the local community and environment. Destinations International defines destination stewardship as *"the continuous pursuit of a net positive tourism ecosystem that exists in alignment with shared community values"*, yielding positive outcomes for both residents and visitors [6]. Additionally, The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) articulates destination stewardship as *"an approach to destination governance that seeks to balance the economic, environmental, and social/cultural needs of the destination; whilst operating within a legitimate governance model with active participation from public and private sectors, as well as the local community [16]."* A number of frameworks and guidelines for operationalizing destination stewardship have emerged from industry and academia. For example, the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) includes destination stewardship principles in its destination criteria, advocating for multi-stakeholder destination management organizations and community participation in decision-making [5]. A useful conceptualization of destination stewardship is offered by the WTTC, which identifies ten critical triggers that guide destinations towards more effective and integrated governance models. These include balancing supply and demand to manage growth and overtourism, responding to sustainability requirements through green technologies and circular economy practices, and enhancing the visitor economy via multi-stakeholder collaboration that benefits both tourists and residents. Destinations are encouraged to adopt value-oriented success metrics, strengthen governmental involvement in governance, and implement placemaking strategies to enhance identity, liveability, and economic opportunities. Smart tourism development and enabling technologies improve infrastructure, visitor experience, and operational efficiency. Moreover, building resilience to crises and promoting social inclusion ensure equitable access, workforce diversity, and community empowerment. Together, these pillars provide a comprehensive framework for linking public–private–community partnerships with community-based tourism and sustainable destination stewardship [16]. Destination stewardship represents a strategic, place-based approach to tourism governance that emphasizes sustainability, community engagement, and long-term resilience. Unlike traditional destination management, stewardship focuses on the holistic care of a destination's environmental, socio-cultural, economic, and governance systems, ensuring that tourism development aligns with both resident well-being and visitor satisfaction. Key practices include engaging diverse community stakeholders in planning, inventorying and preserving local assets, and implementing governance structures that balance visitor demands with resource conservation [7]. Despite its recognized benefits, destination stewardship faces several interrelated barriers that hinder effective governance and cross-sector collaboration. First, the tourism sector is highly fragmented, with activities spread across multiple industries, government departments, and geographic levels, often resulting in siloed decision-making, unclear ownership, and competing agendas. Second, there is frequently an unclear mandate for stewardship, as traditional tourism models prioritize short-term growth over long-term community or environmental value, and destination management organizations often lack explicit responsibility for social and ecological impacts. Third, clashing cultures and agendas between public authorities, private businesses, and local communities create mistrust and limit meaningful collaboration, with community voices often underrepresented in decision-making. Finally, a lack of reliable knowledge and data on visitor impacts impedes informed planning, as available data are typically fragmented, incomplete, or

not shared across stakeholders, undermining evidence-based strategies for sustainable tourism [16].

Traditional public–private partnerships (PPPs) in tourism mainly focus on government–business collaboration, often excluding direct community involvement. Community interests are typically represented only indirectly, limiting their influence on decision-making. Consequently, there is a growing shift toward public–private–community partnerships (PPCPs), which actively engage local stakeholders to promote inclusive governance, equitable benefit-sharing, and sustainable destination stewardship [1]. The rationale for incorporating communities into tourism partnerships is straightforward: tourism development directly affects local people and their environment. Excluding community voices can result in conflict, resistance, or suboptimal outcomes. For example, a private investor developing a resort with government approval but without community consultation may face local opposition or fail to address critical needs such as employment opportunities or infrastructure improvements. Conversely, engaging the community from the outset encourages local buy-in, smoother project implementation, and a more equitable distribution of benefits, reinforcing the effectiveness and sustainability of PPCPs in tourism governance [11].

The inclusion of communities as active partners in tourism governance has its roots in the broader movement of community-based natural resource management and participatory development that gained momentum in the 1980s–1990s. Early examples in tourism often involved conservation projects where local people were engaged to combat the failures of top-down approaches. For instance, community-based tourism in Nepal and the Himalayas emerged as a response to unmanaged trekking tourism; NGOs and government agencies helped villagers organize homestays and local guide services, effectively partnering with external tour operators to create a more balanced form of tourism development [13]. Studies on heritage governance describe PPCPs as extensions of PPPs into social inclusion and participatory models that expand beyond transactional cooperation to shared responsibility for both economic and social outcomes [3]. Although theoretical work is still limited, these multi-stakeholder models are considered promising for connecting governance with community interests in sustainable tourism contexts.

Strong community involvement within partnerships is consistently linked to improved long-term sustainability outcomes such as enhanced local capacity, culturally authentic tourism experiences, and equitable benefit sharing. Systematic reviews show that when communities participate actively in planning and implementation, destinations tend to display better socio-economic and environmental results than when governance is top-down [10]. This reinforces the rationale for integrating community stakeholders directly into governance frameworks rather than relying on indirect representation.

Despite potential benefits, research indicates structural and practical barriers to implementing PPCPs, including lack of clear governance mandates, fragmented sectoral responsibilities, and weak institutional support that impede genuine community involvement. Studies also highlight that participatory processes may be slow, costly, and conflict-prone, leading to resistance from decision-makers who prioritize efficiency over inclusiveness [8].

Destination Stewardship requires cooperation and a shared vision among all stakeholders regarding the future of tourism and the destination. It can only thrive with the active commitment of a broad spectrum of actors, including the public and private sectors. This engagement entails taking responsibility for shaping and leading on the destination's priority issues while collaborating closely with the local community, guided by the principles of the triple bottom line: people, planet, and profit. Below, the figure illustrates the key benefits of destination stewardship for the public sector, private sector, and local communities.

Figure 1: Benefits of destination stewardship for public, private, and community stakeholders

Private Sector Benefits	Public Sector Benefits	Community Benefits
• Compete on a level playing field • Receive government support • Connect with destination needs (CSR) • ‘Coopetition’ with other businesses for mutual benefit • Protected products and investments as destination quality is preserved • Access to new, innovative or authentic products • Positive community relations • Less - or more efficient - regulation • More resilient supply chains • Positive customer experiences • Networking opportunities	• A mandate for destination management • Shared resources/ accountability • Positive community relations • Private sector commitment to changes • Backing for investment in new infrastructures • Successful diversification of products and markets • A more resilient visitor economy • Enhanced destination image • Improved liveability	• Strong voice in development processes • Improved quality of life • Diverse amenities • Inclusive opportunities for employment and entrepreneurialism

Source: World Travel & Tourism Council, 2021

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, participatory research design based on multi-stakeholder workshops and co-creation methods to explore the role of public–private–community partnerships (PPCPs) in advancing destination stewardship through community-based tourism (CBT). Given the complexity of tourism governance and the interdependence of stakeholders, a participatory approach is particularly appropriate, as it enables the inclusion of diverse perspectives and facilitates collaborative knowledge production. The research is exploratory and interpretive in nature, aiming to generate practical and theoretical insights into stakeholder collaboration processes.

The core methodological approach involves the organization of the structured multi-stakeholder workshop, designed to facilitate dialogue and joint problem-solving among key actors in the tourism system. This workshop serve as platforms for co-creation, where participants collaboratively identify challenges, define priorities, and propose solutions related to destination stewardship and CBT development. The approach emphasizes interactive engagement, enabling stakeholders to share experiences, negotiate interests, and build a shared vision for sustainable tourism governance.

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to ensure the inclusion of relevant stakeholders representing the public sector (government agencies), private sector (tourism businesses, local investors), and local communities (community leaders, local entrepreneurs). A total of 17 participants were recruited to balance diversity with effective group interaction. Selection criteria included stakeholder relevance, demonstrated experience in tourism development, and active involvement in decision-making processes. This sampling approach ensures that the study captures a comprehensive range of perspectives across the tourism governance system.

Data was collected through workshop which lasted approximately 3 hours. The workshop was structured around key thematic areas, including stakeholder roles, governance challenges, collaboration mechanisms, and strategies for enhancing destination stewardship. Data collection methods included group discussions, brainstorming sessions, and participatory mapping exercises, all of which are recorded and documented. Additional notes and visual outputs (e.g., stakeholder maps, strategy frameworks) were also collected as qualitative data.

The collected data was analyzed using thematic analysis, following an inductive approach to identify key patterns, themes, and relationships. Transcripts and workshop outputs were coded to extract insights related to collaboration processes, governance structures, success factors, and barriers in PPCPs.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine how public–private–community partnerships (PPCPs) can advance destination stewardship within the framework of community-based tourism (CBT). The findings confirm that PPCPs represent a critical governance innovation capable of addressing the structural limitations of traditional tourism management approaches. Through integrating public authority, private sector efficiency, and community-based knowledge systems, PPCPs facilitate a more inclusive, adaptive, and context-sensitive model of destination governance. The results demonstrate that destination stewardship is most effectively operationalized when governance structures move beyond dyadic public–private arrangements and actively embed communities as equal partners. In this regard, CBT functions not merely as a tourism product but as a governance mechanism that strengthens local agencies, enhances social capital, and promotes equitable benefit distribution. The participatory workshop findings highlight that co-creation processes enable stakeholders to negotiate shared priorities, reduce conflict, and align tourism development with local socio-cultural and environmental values. Furthermore, the study identifies that PPCPs enhance stewardship outcomes through three interrelated pathways: (i) the establishment of inclusive decision-making architectures, (ii) the strengthening of trust and collaboration among stakeholders, and (iii) the improvement of resource allocation and benefit-sharing mechanisms. However, persistent challenges such as institutional fragmentation, power asymmetries, and limited technical capacity at the community level continue to constrain the full realization of PPCPs.

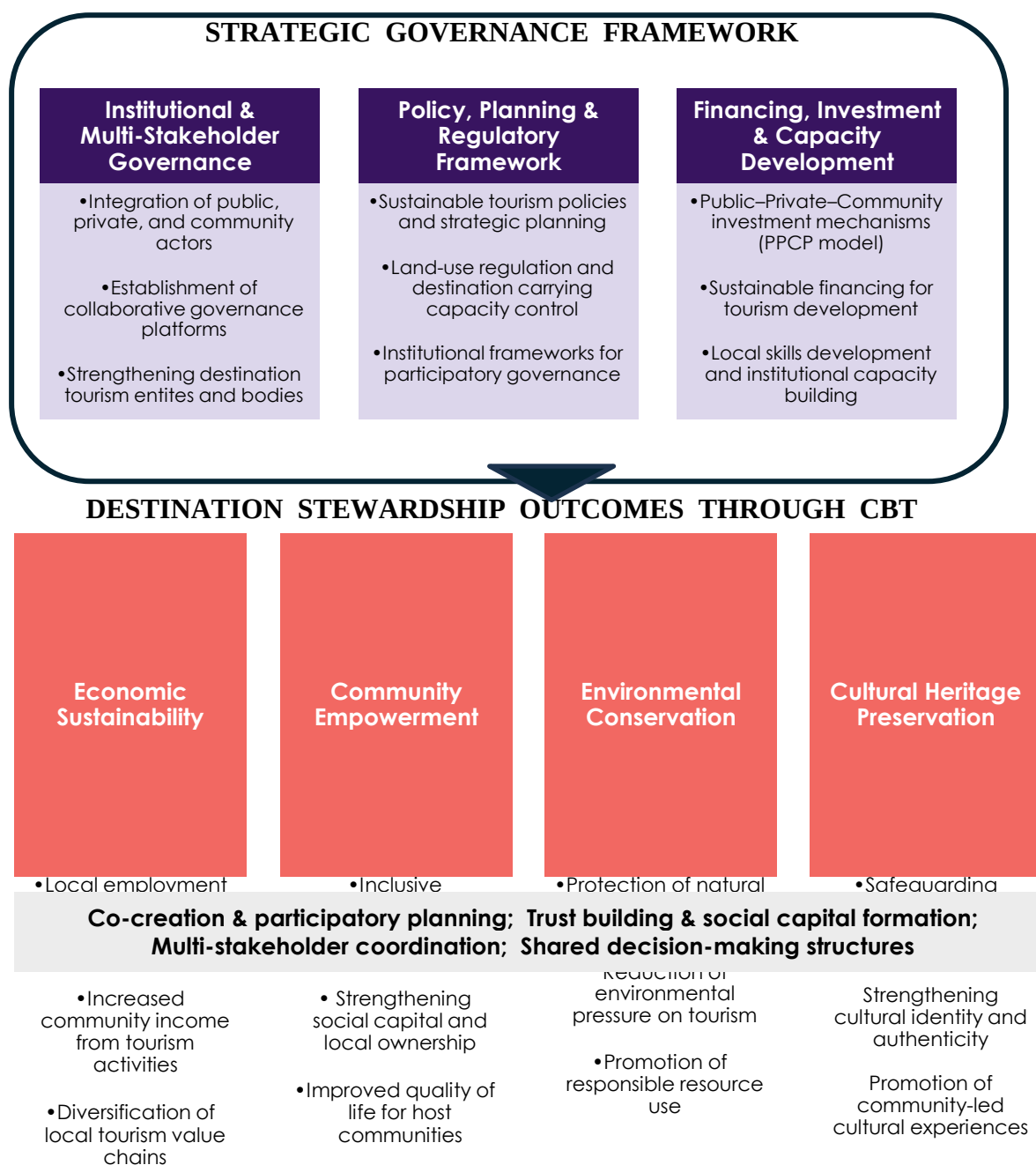
Building on the findings of the study, a set of strategic and evidence-based recommendations is proposed to strengthen the effectiveness of PPCPs and to enhance their role in advancing destination stewardship through CBT development. These are the following:

1. *Institutionalization of PPCP Frameworks*: Governments should formalize PPCPs within tourism governance structures by establishing clear legal mandates, roles, and coordination mechanisms.
2. *Strengthening Community Capacity*: Targeted capacity-building programs should be implemented to enhance local communities' skills in tourism, entrepreneurship, and governance participation.
3. *Development of Co-creation Platforms*: Regular multi-stakeholder forums and participatory workshops should be institutionalized as standard practice in destination planning. These platforms facilitate continuous dialogue, conflict resolution, and joint strategy development.
4. *Enhancing Data Sharing and Knowledge Systems*: Integrated data systems should be developed to support evidence-based decision-making. Open data sharing among

public, private, and community actors can improve transparency, monitoring, and adaptive management.

5. *Promoting Equitable Benefit Distribution:* Policies should ensure that tourism revenues are fairly distributed across stakeholders, particularly local communities. Mechanisms such as community funds, local procurement policies, and inclusive business models should be prioritized.
6. *Supporting Adaptive and Resilient Governance:* Destinations should adopt flexible governance models that can respond to external shocks (e.g., crises, climate change). PPCPs should be embedded within broader resilience and sustainability strategies.

Below is the conceptual model developed based on the literature review, workshop data, and empirical findings, illustrating PPCPs as a governance interface for destination stewardship.



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РАЗВИТИЕ УПРАВЛЕНИЯ ДЕСТИНАЦИЯМИ В КОНТЕКСТЕ ТУРИЗМА НА
ОСНОВЕ СООБЩЕСТВ ЧЕРЕЗ МОДЕЛЬ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННО–ЧАСТНО–
ОБЩЕСТВЕННОГО ПАРТНЁРСТВА
РЕЗЮМЕ

Ключевые слова: государственно–частно–общественное партнёрство; туризм на основе сообществ; управление дестинациями; устойчивое развитие туризма; оллаборативное управление

Концепция управления дестинациями (destination stewardship) сформировалась как важная парадигма в системе управления туризмом, обеспечивающая положительное влияние развития туризма на охрану окружающей среды, сохранение культурного наследия и благосостояние местных сообществ. Вместе с тем достижение таких сбалансированных результатов требует выхода за рамки традиционного взаимодействия государственного и частного секторов и внедрения более инклюзивных и партисипативных моделей управления. В данной работе рассматривается роль государственно–частно–общественных партнёрств (ГЧОП) в развитии управления дестинациями в контексте туризма на основе сообществ. Теоретическая основа исследования базируется на теории заинтересованных сторон, концепциях коллаборативного управления и устойчивого развития. Модель ГЧОП рассматривается как трёхсторонний механизм, объединяющий регулирующую роль государства, экономический и инновационный потенциал частного сектора, а также знания и опыт местных сообществ в рамках единой системы управления. Исследование опирается на качественную методологию; сбор данных осуществлялся посредством воркшоп с участием различных заинтересованных сторон. Результаты показывают, что данная модель управления способствует более инклюзивным процессам принятия решений, укреплению социального капитала и более справедливому распределению доходов от туризма. Местные сообщества играют ключевую роль в сохранении природных и культурных ресурсов, государственные структуры обеспечивают институциональную стабильность и нормативно-правовую базу, тогда как частный сектор усиливает

инвестиционные потоки, внедрение инноваций и операционную эффективность. Кроме того, в исследовании модель ГЧОП представлена как координирующий механизм, связывающий туризм на основе сообществ с управлением дестинациями, и предлагается концептуальная модель, обосновывающая данную взаимосвязь. Полученные результаты свидетельствуют о том, что внедрение модели ГЧОП способствует повышению системной эффективности, устойчивости и социально-экономического баланса на уровне дестинаций, предлагая эффективный управленческий подход к устойчивому и регенеративному развитию туризма.

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İCMA ƏSASLI TURİZM KONTEKSTİNDƏ DESTİNASİYA İDARƏÇİLİYİNİN
DÖVLƏT–ÖZƏL–İCMA TƏRƏFDAŞLIQLARI MODELİ VASİTƏSİLƏ İNKİŞAFI
XÜLASƏ

Açar sözlər: Dövlət–Özəl–İcma Tərəfdaşlığı, icma əsaslı turizm, destinasiya idarəçiliyi, dayanıqlı turizmin inkişafı, kollaborativ idarəetmə

Destinasiya idarəçiliyində “stewardship” yanaşması turizm inkişafının ətraf mühitin mühafizəsinə, mədəni irsin qorunmasına və yerli icmaların rifahına müsbət təsir göstərməsini təmin edən mühüm bir paradigma kimi formalaşmışdır. Lakin bu balanslı nəticələrin əldə olunması ənənəvi dövlət–özəl sektor əməkdaşlığı çərçivəsinin genişləndirilməsini və daha inklüziv, iştirakçı idarəetmə modellərinin tətbiqini zəruri edir. Bu tədqiqat icma əsaslı turizm (İƏT) kontekstində Dövlət–Özəl–İcma Tərəfdaşlıqlarının (DÖİT) destinasiya idarəçiliyinin inkişafına təsirini təhlil edir. Nəzəri çərçivə kimi maraqlı tərəflər (stakeholder) nəzəriyyəsi, kollaborativ idarəetmə və dayanıqlı inkişaf yanaşmaları əsas götürülmüş və DÖİT modeli dövlətin tənzimləyici rolunu, özəl sektorun iqtisadi və innovativ potensialını, eləcə də yerli icmaların bilik və təcrübəsini vahid idarəetmə sistemində birləşdirən üçtərəfli mexanizm kimi təqdim edilmişdir. Tədqiqat keyfiyyət yönümlü metodologiyaya əsaslanır və məlumatlar çoxsaylı maraqlı tərəflərin iştirakı ilə həyata keçirilən vörkşop vasitəsilə toplanmışdır. Nəticələr göstərir ki, sözügedən idarəetmə modeli qərarvermə proseslərinin daha inklüziv təşkilinə, sosial kapitalın güclənməsinə və turizm gəlirlərinin daha ədalətli bölüşdürülməsinə şərait yaradır. Yerli icmalar mədəni və təbii resursların qorunmasında aparıcı rol oynayır, dövlət institusional sabitlik və tənzimləyici yanaşmanı təmin edir, özəl sektor isə investisiya axınını, innovativ yanaşmaları və əməliyyat səmərəliliyini gücləndirir. Bununla yanaşı, tədqiqatda DÖİT modeli icma əsaslı turizm ilə destinasiya idarəçiliyi arasında əlaqələndirici mexanizm kimi təqdim olunur və bu yanaşmanı əsaslandıran konseptual mexanizm təqdim olunur. Əldə olunan nəticələr göstərir ki, DÖİT modelinin tətbiqi destinasiya səviyyəsində sistemli səmərəliliyin, dayanıqlılığın və sosial-iqtisadi balansın güclənməsinə töhfə verir və bu baxımdan daha dayanıqlı və regenerativ turizm inkişafı üçün effektiv idarəetmə yanaşması kimi çıxış edir.

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