

Review

State-of-the-Art Review on Destination Marketing and Destination Management

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Abstract: This article presents a narrative perspective review of the state-of-the-art of destination marketing and management. The past 15 years of developments, stretching from technological advances enabling methodological progress and new consumer behavior to climate, health, and financial crises, require a reassessment of previous academic contributions and current practices. Referring back to the social origins of destinations, this article conceptualizes destinations as a heterogeneous space of flows and proposes future research linked to tourist demand and tourism supply, sustainability and resilience, technological shifts, and institutions. Finally, six broader streams of conversations suggest how to advance the marketing and management of destinations related to a destination ontology grounded in flows, with a focus on processes and action, stewardship and collaboration, resilient destinations, transient and permanent residents, as well as new instrumental technologies and augmented experiences.

Keywords: narrative review; destination marketing; destination management; visitor flows; sustainability; resilience; smart tourism; meta design; research agenda; stewardship



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1. Introduction

Over the last half century, scholars have developed theories, models, frameworks, and tools to describe, explain, or predict behavior related to destinations [1]. However, the last 15 years have seen several developments that challenge the historical generalizability of those scholarly contributions as well as the effectiveness of existing sector practices to manage and market destinations.

The financial crisis of the late 2000s saw cuts to the budgets of destination management organizations (DMO) [2]. The social web 2.0 shifted control over destination communication to visitors [3]. The adoption of smartphones and the mobile internet have altered tourist booking and travel behavior, and advances in consumer tracking and machine learning enabled new insights into large volumes of tourist behavior [4]. Moreover, while not completely new, the public debate on overtourism since the mid-2010s has increased sensitivity to tourism growth limits and the important role of residents and local communities [5].

Recently, even previously stable destinations in the Global North have increasingly realized the effects of ecological issues related to climate change, such as heat waves, droughts, and a lack of snow (e.g., [6]). Movements like ‘Fridays for Future’ are pushing for climate action [7], and customers demand sustainable alternatives [8]. Finally, the global COVID-19 pandemic brought most travel to a standstill and illustrated the vulnerability of tourism destinations on large numbers of international arrivals, the potential ecological

benefits in the absence of tourist mobility, and the difficulty of concerted actions to build back tourism in more sustainable, equitable, and inclusive ways [9].

This article takes these developments as a starting point to reconsider the state of the art in destination marketing and destination management. A decade after Pike and Page's [10] (p. 202) "narrative analysis of the literature", the purpose of this narrative perspective review is to initiate conversations that challenge the existing streams of research and enrich our understanding of how to manage and market destinations.

2. Methodological Approach

This article does not attempt to systematically review all of what has been written about destinations as well as their management and marketing. As prior reviews have argued, this would be challenging given the fragmented nature of existing work stretching about 50 years of scholarship across different domains [1]. If the purpose of a review is comprehensiveness and saturation [11], then large and diverse bodies of knowledge lend themselves best to systematic bibliometric reviews, given the approximate 10,000-word limit of a scholarly article. While not without merits [12], bibliometric reviews tend to forgo substantive discussion of the work they cover and offer a limited perspective on future questions to explore to advance an academic field.

This review prioritizes such qualitative discussion and offers a perspective on the state of the art of what we know about destination marketing and management to date. Different sections explore the questions it motivates to inspire and to understand the future of tourism and tourist destinations following the format of a narrative literature review [13]. We acknowledge that this methodology prioritizes generativity over scope, rigor, and transparency [14]. Still, the narrative format is suitable for this body of knowledge "spread across disciplinary boundaries or domains" [15] (p. 380) and has merits in developing propositions for future work. As such, we reflexively embrace the performative and subjective aspects of reviewing academic knowledge [16]. That is to say, in this perspective review, we went beyond collecting and presenting existing information to its interpretation and to the creation of ideas beyond the initial material to outline avenues for future research.

The starting reference points of this narrative perspective review are two sets of articles: The first set consists of four articles reporting the 2012, 2014, 2016, and 2022 consensus on advances in destination management. These are consecutive research agendas published in the *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management* by Beritelli, Laesser, and Reinhold [17–20]. The four consensus articles are grounded in an expert community of 119 scholars and practitioners from North and South America, Europe, and Asia Pacific. At specialized conferences ("Advances in Destination Management Forum") between 2012 and 2022, this community co-created research agendas following the consensus discourse methodology. The second set includes three articles published in *Tourism Management* including seminal works by Buhalis in 2000 [21] and Pike and Page in 2014 [10] as well as a recent comprehensive review article on destination research by Huang, Karl, Wong, and Law in 2023 [1]. This latter set exemplifies the diversity of topics and dominant perspectives on destination management and marketing since the start of the late 1990s. We lifted central issues from the four consensus articles and used the three articles from the second set as contrast points before branching out to the related literature to identify what we know and what we seek to understand in each domain. This is explored throughout four sections labelled 'destinations', 'the big challenges', 'demand and supply', and 'institutions' before integrating points in a discussion and drawing conclusions.

3. Destinations

3.1. Conceptual Confusion

Originally, the concept of a 'destination' was coined from a traveler's perspective (e.g., [22,23]). But in the 1970s, the complexity, dynamics, and consequences of visitor flows in spaces were not fully understood and neither research nor practice developed suitable means to manage the phenomenon. Arguably, this explains why the destination became a

geographical concept [24] by the end of the 20th century. The geographical definition offered several administrative benefits: (1) destinations became delineable objects marked by clear, administrative boundaries; (2) destinations and phenomena within their boundaries could be quantified and measured; and (3) institutions and organizations such as DMOs could be designated to analyze, shape, or even control them [21].

Since then, the concept of a 'destination' has taken on a life of its own. There are a multitude of subtopics in research and in practice that refer to a 'tourism destination' or a 'tourist destination'. This label has been applied to everything from a single attraction (e.g., Disneyland) to a municipality (e.g., Venice), a region (e.g., Côte d'Azur), or even a country (e.g., Jamaica). Recent studies underline this diversity and implicitly reveal a problem [1,25,26]: the use of the concept has produced more confusion than it has helped to produce clarity or helpful practical solutions. Moreover, empirically, visitors often do not conform to the boundaries of destinations as they pursue experiences. Instead, the resulting visitor flows create variable spaces that even change over time [27].

To address this problem, it is worth returning to the social origin of the concept, the journey, and worth asking how the concept can support scientific advances and above all practice. New insights and methodological progress since the early 2000s have helped return to the original phenomenon, travelers in places, and appreciate what its diverse forms and manifestations imply.

3.2. Social Origin of Destinations

Travel is a pervasive, social phenomenon, typical for but not exclusive to the human species [28,29]. When people travel during normal working hours, as commuters, or in their leisure time, they move along flows [30,31]. The visitor is the main actor in their experiences [32]. They decide with whom or what, when, and where they create moments of experience alone or with others. A significant amount of independent decision making resides with travelers, which makes this a particular form of household production [33,34]. Following travelers, we learn when and where they go or what they do as well as what they purchase and which services they use. This enables the reconstruction of service chains from an integrated demand and supply perspective and unlocks a detailed understanding of travel and tourism centered on the visitor [35].

Tourist attractions are basic elements of leisure travel [22,36]. They become collectively desirable when many individuals deem them valuable, meaningful, and important. Many of today's renowned tourist attractions have not been created for leisure travel. They are places of cultural origin like Angkor Wat (Cambodia) or natural sites like the Rocky Mountain Peaks (Canada). Places serve as potential stages for visitors' experiences or performances [35]. Visitors shape their own experiences as they take decisions and actions, draw on selected places or more generally 'resources' offered by the environment and thereby build their own stories and create memories. In this process, travelers create tourist destinations.

Recent technological and methodological progress has helped us study and understand this phenomenon more closely. What tourism sociologists conceptualized and anecdotally supported (e.g., [37]) can now be measured and analyzed. Information technology has enabled researchers to reconstruct visitor flows in a number of different ways: Geo- and time-tagged data extracted from user-generated content on social media (e.g., [38,39]), from credit card transactions (e.g., [40]), from smartphones with their GPS locations [41–44], or captured from tourist cards (e.g., [45]). These data show that visitors are more likely to be at landmarks, attractions, and tourist sites than at other 'ordinary' places. Visitors create a dense web of individual journeys as they connect tourist attractions or sites by moving through other non-tourist spaces [46,47] where they may experience chance encounters [48]. Furthermore, recent work has started to classify large volumes of such journeys based on mobile phone data [49] to provide large-scale evidence of spatial behavioral patterns [50] and visitor flow typologies [51].

On this basis, a tourist destination is a network of points and lines or trajectories [35], not an area or surface. Different, specific, and attractive tourist places are connected to other tourist places and non-tourist places in between. All these points and connections constitute a dense fabric of flows that encompass transient and non-transient groups. The use and activation of space by different visitor flows over time create variable geometries [27], not just one administratively bounded object. To some extent, a recent update of the definition of 'tourism destination' by UNWTO has started to acknowledge this by including that destinations can be spaces "without administrative and/or analytical boundaries" [52] (p. 14).

3.3. *Visitors vs. Residents*

The above perspective has outlined that travel is a social phenomenon turned into business. As travel creates value in the form of economic opportunities for entrepreneurs and businesses, it also has ecological and socio-cultural consequences that affect local residents [53]. Yet, it would be too simplistic to conceptualize visitors and residents as antagonists. When tourists travel, they have needs such as to eat, sleep, acquire information, or be entertained, which creates economic opportunities. Day trippers and locals share many of these needs as part of their leisure activities or excursions at their place of residence or in their region (see definition by [54]). They exhibit similar behaviors and partake in visitor flows. Consequently, residents themselves are to different degrees part of tourism and leisure in what can be referred to as the 'visitation system'. The boundaries between the roles as residents and visitors are fluid and their concerns and interests are diverse. That does not mean that residents can be ignored because they are just another type of visitor. The local population is an essential element of travel. Residents receive visitors and are usually the first ones to appreciate places and activities as well as being advocates of sustainable forms of tourism development [55]. They are an important nucleus to the attractiveness of places as they are to the future governance of the destinations in which they reside [56].

3.4. *Consequences*

Accepting travel as a social phenomenon to, in, and through places comes with a variety of challenges. The first set of challenges relates to interactions among travelers and residents. These problems mainly concern social and environmental aspects as well as the quality of encounters and services. Engaging with destinations is a matter of human interaction and social exchange. This includes questions related to the emergence, rise, and decline of visitor flows (for a recent discussion of life cycles, see [57]) consistent with the definition of destinations as variable geometries.

The second set of challenges refers to exchanges between people and spaces or objects. Spatial design, which includes the functions of living and doing business, mobility and land use, as well as the exploitation of landscape are fundamental aspects of destination management. This was recognized very early on [58] but is still an ongoing research challenge [59].

4. The Big Challenges

In addition to the challenges of theorizing destinations, as evident in the previous section, several seismic changes serve as a focus for the future management of destinations. We address them as two big challenges: 'sustainability and resilience' and 'technology shifts'.

4.1. *Sustainability and Resilience*

The frequency, severity, and unpredictability of short-term shocks and ongoing stressors on the performance and sustainability of tourist destinations, as evident recently with the COVID-19 pandemic [60], merely reinforce the fragile nature of tourism in large parts of the world, with the environmental, ecological, social, and economic impacts on many destinations a perennial challenge [61,62].

The challenges of overtourism [63], sustainability and resiliency [64,65], accessibility [66], climate change [67] and planetary boundaries [68] are particularly impactful and arguably transformational to destinations and related socio-ecological systems. The latter challenge, underpinned by nine so-called planetary ‘boundaries’ that include ‘climate’, ‘biosphere’ and ‘ocean’, among others, suggests that any transgression beyond these boundaries risks “irreversible global environmental change” [68] (p. 1). Referred to by some as the Anthropocene [69], rapid industrialization since the 1950s has contributed to a period of sustained acceleration that threatens the very existence of the planet as we know it. Tourism has undoubtedly contributed to this acceleration, with some contending that the notion of sustainable tourism is already obsolete [70]. Although perhaps late, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer a pragmatic, albeit questioned, approach [71] to mitigate some of the challenges presented. Rather than adopting a blanket ‘one size fits all’ approach, destinations are advised to identify those SDGs resonant with their challenges, to establish suitable measures and indicators, and to ensure data are available to monitor progress, as is evident in the case of Orlando, Florida (e.g., [72]).

With the unsustainable limits of tourism growth first introduced in the early 1970s [73], research encompassing sustainability, sustainable development, and sustainable tourism represents one of the most substantial and cohesive bodies of work in the field of tourism, despite the ongoing questions pertaining to alignment between tourism and sustainable development [74]. However, while sustainability in the context of tourist destinations (i.e., the incorporation of sustainable practices in and by the tourism industry) is as applicable today as it was back in the 1970s, the debate has moved on, where more resilient and holistic forms of sustainable tourism have emerged [1]. Such forms necessitate those managing destinations to understand the destination ‘system’ and its myriad of interactions and influences more deeply which requires a less monolithic and more flexible, holistic mindset [17,20]. A deeper understanding of the concept of planetary boundaries is also advised, with the impacts of anthropogenic change (overtourism being one such example), to be measured, monitored, and acted upon closely (see [72]).

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, overtourism was a phenomenon driving sustainability discourse with poor destination planning and the mismanagement of visitor flows contributing to highly unsustainable forms of tourism [63]. However, it was the almost-overnight cessation of tourism caused by the pandemic, which ultimately served as a catalyst to revisit the prevailing growth paradigm. Rather than focusing on the more traditional ecological, environmental, and social aspects of sustainability, more attention on destination resilience, policy, and governance was forthcoming [19,75]. A recent publication by the High-Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy on opportunities for transforming coastal and marine tourism is evidence of such a trend at the policy level with its focus on sustainability, regeneration, and resilience, with examples spanning Panama, Italy, the Seychelles, Fiji, and Honduras drawing attention to the changing dynamics of tourism development [76].

The distinction between sustainability versus resilience is best described by Lew [77] (p. 14) who states that while “sustainability mitigates or prevents change by maintaining resources above a normative safe level”, resilience adapts to change by “attempting to build capacity to return to a desired state following both anticipated and unanticipated disruptions”. With its origins in ecological systems thinking [78], resilience presents a valuable perspective on tourism as a complex adaptive system. Fundamental to an understanding and application of resilience thinking are integrative, non-linear, and inter-disciplinary approaches, all of which lend themselves to a more in-depth understanding of the dynamic and complex domain of tourist destinations [79]. However, more detailed work is needed to address “the complexity of tourism governance, destination development and management from a resilience perspective” [80] (p. 161) in connection to adaptation pathways.

One of the primary obstacles to understanding and appreciating the dynamics of resilience in tourism is the dominant contribution of linear narratives, such as the tourist area life cycle by Butler [81]. The linearity of the life cycle model is inadequate to critically

examine the forces at play in destinations [82], some of which result from the interplay between individually and collectively evolving visitor flows [57]. Cochrane [79] (p. 173) suggests that the basic principles “of the resilience concept are that systems do not evolve in a linear fashion but according to a cycle or loop; that the phases of the cycle roughly repeat, but the characteristics of each stage at different iterations are not necessarily identical; that the characteristics and the speed of recovery from a destabilizing event depend on the system’s adaptive capacity; and that adaptive capacity depends on various forms of capital accumulated during previous phases and iterations”.

4.2. Technology Shifts

A second significant force at play in shaping the dynamics of destinations are shifts facilitated by technological advancements [83] that present challenges for future perspectives on destination marketing and management. Advanced technologies supply DMOs with novel platforms and tools, radically modifying how they engage and connect with potential tourists and promote their destinations. Instrumental technologies such as social media platforms, Metaverse, Virtual Reality (VR), Mixed Reality (MR), Extended Reality (XR), Augmented Reality (AR), and mobile applications have become essential, enabling the distribution of visual content, informational updates, and real-time audience interactions. These technologies are not only transforming the way we communicate and interact but they are also potentially enabling new business models [84]. Moreover, the data amassed through these platforms constitute an invaluable informational reservoir for understanding visitor flows. When analyzed, these data allow businesses to understand customer preferences, behaviors, and expectations thoroughly [85]. Such an understanding subsequently empowers DMOs to tailor their offerings and refine their marketing strategies.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is undeniably transforming destination marketing, introducing many significant challenges while simultaneously offering the potential for personalized and efficient marketing strategies. While AI demands considerable computational resources and specialized development skills, its application in marketing sectors may not require such in-depth technical expertise. For instance, platforms like Expedia leverage AI for targeted campaigns. However, this relies more on a nuanced understanding of customer behaviors and compliance with data usage regulations than on mastering technology. Enhancing customer engagement and booking rates necessitates successfully integrating AI into existing processes, which is often complex [86]. Additionally, as exemplified by Hilton Hotels’ AI concierge ‘Connie’, AI’s role in automation calls for careful planning and ongoing adaptation based on customer interactions (e.g., [87]). There is a need to balance automated services with tasks that require a human touch, necessitating thoughtful navigation in response to evolving customer preferences [88]. The emergence of large language models like ChatGPT adds another layer of complexity to this landscape. AI models have the potential to create persuasive and nuanced content, potentially eclipsing human-crafted promotional materials. However, they also present transparency, bias, and privacy issues that pose ethical and regulatory hurdles. It should be noted that the use of such models in marketing may not require technical expertise in AI, but rather a strategic approach to their implementation.

Additionally, there is the risk of the models creating what AI research calls ‘hallucinations’—misleading or entirely fabricated information not rooted in training data. These are significant challenges that future destination marketing must address [89]. In contrast, the AI model’s performance with industry-specific plugins could enhance the chatbot’s role by creating personalized travel recommendations for online travel product purchases and providing real-time customer service, all while learning and adapting from ongoing interactions to deliver increasingly more accurate and timely results [90].

While revolutionizing the tourism sector, emerging technologies like VR, AR, MR, and XR, and the impending Metaverse present notable challenges for future destination marketing [91]. Despite promising immersive experiences and novel engagement methods, integrating these technologies requires significant investment, technical proficiency, and

an understanding of blockchain technology. Adapting business models to leverage the expected USD 300 bn market [92] while ensuring seamless customer experiences will test even the most progressive DMOs. Both public bodies and private entities have crucial roles to play in balancing traditional practices with new technologies. Their partnership is critical for the advancement of tourism.

Big data analytics undeniably reshapes destination marketing by offering in-depth insights into travelers' behaviors and preferences [93]. However, its effective implementation presents formidable challenges. Reinhold et al. [19] highlighted a primary issue: the significant financial burden smaller destinations face due to the high cost and limited access to proprietary data from credit card companies. Extracting meaningful insights from massive data sets demands considerable computational resources and expertise. The strict compliance requirements of the EU's data privacy and protection directives, specifically the General Data Protection Regulation [94], may complicate its use.

Smart tourism ushers in a paradigm shift for DMOs, mandating substantial modifications in governance and management. This shift presents both a great prospect and a daunting challenge, emphasizing the need for innovative management strategies and proficiencies. Prior research has pointed to the requisite for strategic pivots towards technology-facilitated co-creation, public-private-consumer partnerships, and an ecosystem-centric perspective [95]. Today's digital transformation, characterized by the emergence of AI, big data, and VR, features the importance of altering both strategies and skillsets. It is crucial for marketers to comprehend these technologies, effectively analyze data, and shift from mass marketing to more personalized approaches. This transformation towards 'smart tourism'—where advanced technologies are harnessed for personalized visitor experiences, data-driven decision-making, and sustainable practices—is necessary for destination marketing. This involves a significant mindset shift, which is pivotal for successfully adapting to the dynamic digital landscape [96]. Specifically, "Smart tourism allows for new ways of managing tourist flows, better tourist services, new advertising models and new collaborative ventures that build on cloud services and open data to innovate beyond the traditional industry boundaries" [97] (n.p.) as well as for the monitoring of key sustainability indicators.

Some tourism organizations have begun to pioneer such shifts. For example, VisitScotland has launched a comprehensive digital strategy that leverages data analytics, personalized content, and partnerships to provide a unique visitor experience [98]. In South Korea, the Incheon Tourism Organization (ITO) is implementing a comprehensive SMART initiative offering integrated smart tourism experiences, real-time tourist services, role-play content, VR technology walk-throughs, AI tourism recommendation services, intelligent mobility services, and an all-in-one traveler pass. With its open port online-to-offline business model, ITO commits to enabling citizens to become content creators. The intent behind these efforts is to attract more tourists through creative content, to improve service convenience for individual tourists, to create new jobs in the local tourism ecosystem based on data platforms, and to establish a foundation for big-data-driven smart tourism marketing [99].

4.3. Consequences

In relation to sustainability and resilience, the ultimate challenge for those planning, managing, and marketing destinations is that the tourism community is "far from being able to formulate or estimate such systems at any level of realistic detail" [100] (p. 19). Thus, the current and future human capital needs to grasp the wider dynamics and interrelationships of the tourism system. It is on them to understand and implement the adaptive policies as well as management tools and strategies necessary for sustainable and resilient destinations to succeed and survive. Otherwise, resilience risks becoming the empty signifier feared by Weichselgartner and Kelman [101]. Finding leaders who comprehend the magnitude of the benefits to be achieved from such an understanding and who can operate and strategize within a resilient environment hold the key to tourism's

future. Evidence of strategies and actions adopted throughout the COVID-19 pandemic suggests that the industry has already missed a golden opportunity for change with short-term, very expensive systemic forms of stabilization more common and a return to the status quo a perhaps predictable outcome [9]. That said, the most recent DestinationNEXT Strategic Road Map by Destinations International [102] draws attention to the increasing prioritization of the role of the community in destination development, with a call for those managing destinations to view sustainability, resilience, and regeneration from a much broader lens; this is an open invitation to destination leaders to acknowledge, learn about, and include more “inclusive” dimensions in destination planning.

The outlined technological shifts illustrate that future destination marketing must prioritize a seamless and personalized customer experience, along the customer journey as expressed in visitor flows. The collaboration of DMOs with other private entities, such as travel agencies, credit card companies, tour operators, local businesses, and non-profits such as parks and museums, can enhance their offerings, expanding their audience reach and providing a more comprehensive travel experience [103]. Despite its numerous benefits, adopting advanced technology in destination marketing poses significant challenges, including high costs, a dearth of technical expertise, and regulatory compliance requirements. These issues stress the need for extensive research into cost-effective technology implementation, education, and training programs for building technical expertise and literacy, and studies on managing compliance with regulatory environments.

5. Demand and Supply

5.1. *Tourism or Tourist Destination*

The destination marketing and management logic of the 1990s [21] assumed that tourism destinations could be marketed like consumer goods. Destination marketers were advised to develop a unique selling proposition for their amalgam of natural and cultural resources. Despite clear limits to the active control of the locations advertised, it was assumed that tourism destinations could be positioned, marketed, and branded like Coca Cola.

Recent literature, however, has started to challenge this imperfect transfer of consumer goods logic to tourist destinations’ experiential services [104]. It recognizes that demand in the form of visitors is drawn in by the gravitational pull of attractions and influenced by market mavens [51]. Based on complex decision processes [105], visitors ‘activate’ specific suppliers that get linked to one another as a supply network for a particular visitor flow. These linked suppliers help visitors co-create their individual experiences [106]. Thus, tourism destinations are the resource base for alternative individual tourist destinations and must be managed and marketed accordingly.

5.2. *Demand Characteristics*

From a demand perspective, tourism products and services are location-bound and require buyers to travel. Buyers look for available travel offers with suitable natural or manufactured features, for services, and for locations that offer them as a bundle at a specific price point. In many cases, the planning and purchase decisions are coordinated with co-travelers such as family members or friends. The resulting journeys are a ‘basket good’ [107,108] composed of a variety of complementary, mutually indivisible trip-constituting elements. These elements create multi-faceted portfolios and include trip timing, travel companions, transportation, destinations, accommodations, and activities [105,109,110]. Some of these elements are veritably constraining tourists’ purchase decisions [105] and may entail numerous trade-offs [111]. Visitor flows are expressions of aggregated individual decisions [112] and tourist attractions are the localizable manifestations of subjectively valuable, meaningful, and important portfolio elements [113] that interact with specific visitor flows.

Tourist purchase decisions concern the evaluation of largely intangible service elements and traversing local, temporal, and often psychological distance. This entails

risks and uncertainties that buyers try to mitigate by acquiring information as they plan their travel from home or make immediate decisions on the spot [114]. Travel is, thus, a distance [115,116] and information affair [117,118]. Correspondingly, tourism has seen its early adoption and continues to benefit from digital information [119]. With increasing internet adoption since the 1990s, information has become ubiquitous and time- and location-independent, which presents new challenges addressed by market mavens. As information sources multiplied, the challenge was to determine which information to trust and prioritize. Market mavens are people and institutions that are knowledgeable and that control or at least influence the distribution of information in specific demand networks [51]. In some cases, they even directly influence the decision making of potential visitors. Overall, their influence is not just a classic key account or an intermediary. They can be buying centers, purchase-influencing centers, or central players in a social network (see [120]).

There is consensus that a journey and the associated experiences are the result of multiple co-creation processes [121]. Empowered by digital means, travelers significantly contribute to this co-creation [122]. While recently elevated by technology, this is an old insight that links back to the household production theory [123,124]: Individuals use their main resources (time and money) to create experiences and memories supported by an individually activated supply chain. This visitation process produces different spatial behaviors of visitors.

5.3. Supply Characteristics

Destination management approaches from the 1990s used a structural perspective of suppliers in tourism destinations as part of specific value and service chains. However, this structural view of suppliers is increasingly giving way to a dynamic network perspective [125,126]. The network perspective does not abolish hierarchies (e.g., central systems heads vs. outliers), but it identifies different drivers. Today, there is broad consensus that hierarchies are rooted in the power of attraction (i.e., how relevant a supplier is for attracting demand and maintaining visitor flows) and in an actor's contribution to the destination's value added. Actors are central to supply networks and exhibit leadership because of visitor flows. This is often accompanied by elite networks. Elite network membership has been identified as a function of economic power, knowledge, and political connectedness [127], alongside control over scarce, tourism-relevant resources. Providers lacking these characteristics assume subordinate roles in supply networks.

However, even secondary actors with low network centrality have the possibility to pursue their independent agenda because of technological advances that proliferate communication and distribution alternatives. Shelf space is virtually limitless and pre-internet barriers to market access have disappeared alongside the need for governments to pay for such market access [128]. Evidence for this is the proliferation and prevalence of travel-related platforms and associated business models based on network effects [119] that enable even broader economic participation such as hospitality micro-entrepreneurs [129]. Tourism service providers have access to global and sometimes highly specialized distribution channels. Network effects create possibilities for those service providers to engage in communication and positioning via products and prices. Their challenge is no longer market access but how to generate attention and interest in a world of information overload. In conclusion, this has rendered many functions of joint destination marketing obsolete and shifted focus to visitor flows and related supply networks [18,19,27]. Thus, it begs the question of what coordination and joint action are still required in destination marketing and management.

5.4. Consequences

To different degrees, approaches to destination management from the 1990s assumed that a destination's actors and thus its development could be controlled. However, it is time to reconsider this assumption with definitions of destinations moving to variable

geographies, the recognition of visitor flows as collections of individual traveler behavior activating different supply networks within these adaptive spaces, and the need to engage in dynamic systems thinking to address challenges of sustainability and resilience, alongside the impending changes resulting from shifting technology. Instead of trying to control the development of tourism destinations, destination management should take an outside-in perspective focusing on visitor flows as central operational units to be managed and marketed as well as related core processes, thereby adapting their logic toward a tourist destination. Tourist destinations are portfolios of different visitor flows and “a heterogeneous space of flows” [130] (p. 358). Future research is needed to help understand and design the future governance of these processes, which involve will-building and implementation. The next section is concerned with the institutional consequences of these developments.

6. Institutions

6.1. A Metamorphosis

As political creatures, any organization tasked with marketing and/or managing a destination tends to be demarcated by administrative boundaries in line with the geopolitical approach adopted in the 1990s [21,24]. However, it is clear that visitor experiences and the different visitor flows determine the geographically defined spaces that constitute a destination, which can now be measured and analyzed due to recent technological and methodological progress. This makes destinations dynamic, whereas the regulatory and political boundaries are far more static. In addition, these organizations are bound by the responsibilities that have been assigned to them and are financially tethered to the objectives their public and private funders have determined. To bridge the demand and supply perspectives, “policy making for tourism might have to consider introducing dynamic functional spaces to complement the static political spaces to deal with the positive and negative externalities of human mobilities” [19] (p. 7).

In addition, there are a significant number of actors, here referred to as ‘institutions’, that are governmental, non-governmental, or private and that are intertwined in the visitation system and its processes. These institutions can help as well as hinder efforts in controlling and redirecting tourist demand and advancing sustainability efforts. Some examples that illustrate this point are Barcelona where the surrounding towns offer the accommodation options that the city itself is trying to limit; Prague where the airport was expanded to cope with demand even as the city center is overwhelmed with visitors; and Venice where the cruise port has been built on the outskirts, bringing in tens of thousands of excursionists [75].

This situation is further complicated by the many new and intensified challenges that destinations face as well as the changes brought on by technological advances and innovations, discussed in the context of the move towards smart tourism that implicates not only DMOs but all municipal and regional administrative organizations. The visitation process is increasingly regarded as an experience production system that takes the form of a demand-driven co-creation or co-production of experiences between visitors and hosts, making it unlike many other economic sectors discussed in the context of the social origin of destinations. As a result, a multitude of different service providers and other stakeholders participate in this phenomenon, leading to high stakeholder fragmentation. Consequently, the literature on governance in tourism highlights issues such as collaboration, inclusivity, resilience, sustainability, and technology with calls for a greater focus on network structures, particularly in the context of smart destinations, meta-design, and flow. These structures allow for collaboration and coordination among various stakeholders, such as government, businesses, and communities, to work towards common goals in managing and developing tourism destinations. However, the role of taxes in governance is becoming increasingly important. They can be a necessary aspect of financing tourism-related infrastructure and services and mitigating the negative impacts of tourism on the local community and

environment. To this end, many municipalities around the globe have introduced a variety of fees levied on accommodation, car rental, attractions, and other tourist services.

6.2. Smart Tourism Approach

Smart tourism integrates advanced technologies into the fabric of destinations in such a way that their innovation capacity is enhanced, opportunities for value creation are generated, and the negative externalities of tourism are mitigated, all with the aim of providing tourists with superior experiences [95] as discussed under the technological shifts shaping the dynamics of destinations. This requires strong private-government partnerships to achieve the effective coordination and integration of tourism businesses, communities, and government to implement a holistic smart-oriented development plan for destinations [131,132]. The smart tourism destination concept is an extension of the smart city paradigm's key principles to urban or rural tourist areas. It considers both visitors and residents in an effort to support the visitor experience, resident quality of life, resource availability and allocation, mobility, and sustainability. As Errichiello and Micera explain, a smart destination governance process progresses through the "sequential stages of 'assembling', 'ordering', 'implementation', 'evaluation', and 'transformation'" [131] (p. 5). Of crucial importance is the assembling stage as it lays the foundation for the diversity of actors that will be included in charting the strategic smart tourism plan and the basis for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and consensus building.

Different networks surround visitors during the before, during, and after phases of a trip. A great variety of systems capture and generate a wealth of data on every aspect of their spending and travel behavior. "These business analytical applications support the design of smart tourism by offering enhanced customer intelligence, improving business processes, and, ultimately, enabling the implementation of new strategies for navigating an increasingly competitive environment" [133] (p. 303).

6.3. Meta-Design Approach

Destinations have progressively disintegrated into countless numbers of guest-based experience spaces [27]. At the same time, the role of technology in this process has expanded greatly, ranging from supporting the coordination of large numbers of touchpoints (i.e., attractions) that enable seamless communication with visitors, tracking their behavior, and even anticipating their future behavior [134]. Where humans and technological systems intersect, meta-design goes beyond the traditional strategic planning for a predictable future by taking unpredictable dynamics of destinations as experience production systems into account [134]. As DMOs are faced with managing complex systems at the intersection of human and technological spheres, meta-design can facilitate the co-production of tourism experiences as well as help to create socio-technical environments that empower users to engage in informed participation, thus allowing users to become co-designers. This implies an open, iterative process whereby system designers work collaboratively with users but allow for evolutionary growth and refinement as situations arise that require nimbleness in adaptation and creative solutions. This collaborative design integrates physical and computational components to encourage and facilitate informed participation by all stakeholders in the design process, which makes it well suited to deal with rapidly changing environments and uncertain futures [135].

6.4. Flow-Based Approach

The shift in focus from managing geographically defined spaces to a demand-driven co-production of experiences has been accompanied by the transformation from a structural, institutional view of tourism to one that is process-oriented and based on strategic visitor flows [51]. Beritelli, Reinhold, and Laesser [35] describe this contemporary phenomenon as a space of flows, that is a demand-driven, complex, and dynamic ecosystem. "The flow-based view conceptualizes destinations as heterogeneous experience-scapes with multiple, parallel supply networks that derive their economic potential from the co-presence of visitor

flows and the associated potentials for technology-supported real time co-creation” [136] (p. 175).

Building on this networked perspective that attempts to capture how travelers actually plan, experience, and share travel, Stienmetz and Fesenmaier [137] set out to measure the value-creating networks within destinations. This approach sees the DMO as a ‘network orchestrator’ responsible at times for “leading, facilitating, and organizing the collaboration and cooperative efforts of the individual actors/stakeholders that comprise the destination” [137] (p. 1251). Although all types of visitor flows co-create value within a tourist destination, analyzing these flows not only reveals areas for improvement and local strengths [35] but also those that have the greatest economic impact due to the structure of the relationships between touchpoints [137]. Hence, destination management policies should strive to encourage visits to multiple touchpoints, thereby fostering collaboration and competition while avoiding the dominance of concentrated destination resources.

6.5. Taxation

Taxation is increasingly recognized as a strategic tool for DMOs to shape visitor behavior, enhance destination competitiveness, and foster sustainability. As the sector embraces digitization, the demand for transparent, equitable, and coherent digital service taxation rules is escalating, a situation underscored by the proliferation of online booking platforms, cashless transactions, and sharing economy platforms like Airbnb and Uber [138–141].

A common belief within the industry is that lower taxes on tourism will stimulate demand. However, contrary to this perspective, Kristjánsdóttir [142] demonstrates that an increase in taxes, such as Value-Added Tax (VAT), does not necessarily influence the inflow of tourists to Europe. As a result, DMOs are encouraged to shift their focus from solely increasing visitor volumes to enhancing yields, promoting regenerative tourism, and paying greater attention to resident attitudes. This perspective reflects a move away from quantity-based measures of success towards more nuanced, quality-based metrics that consider a range of stakeholders. Another critical issue is the diversity in VAT rates and regulations across jurisdictions, which poses significant complications for businesses operating transnationally. In this regard, DMOs could advocate for more standardized VAT rules, simplifying compliance procedures, and reducing business barriers, making their destinations more attractive to international businesses [143].

Despite these opportunities, DMOs still face considerable challenges. One of the critical hurdles is the disparity in tax rates across nations. This disparity can create an uneven playing field in global tourism, affecting the destinations’ competitiveness [144]. To counter this, DMOs need to carefully balance their taxation policies, weighing the need for competitiveness against the potential revenues required for public services and infrastructure. Revenue generation is generally a challenge for DMOs, as highlighted in a study by Beritelli and Laesser [145], with board composition a critical matter to secure funding such as subsidies from different political levels or voluntary contributions from destination stakeholders.

Alongside the digital transformation of tourism, the sector is also grappling with its environmental impact. Here, taxation emerges as a significant instrument that DMOs can employ to manage this impact. The introduction of ‘green’ or carbon taxes could incentivize sustainable practices among tourists and tourism businesses. Moreover, the revenue generated from these taxes, which can be levied at various political levels—national, state, and local—could be used to fund critical environmental initiatives. The specific distribution and usage of tax revenue are largely dependent on the political context at each level. For instance, at the national level, these funds might be directed towards comprehensive environmental programs, while at the state and local levels, they might be allocated to address more region-specific environmental needs and characteristics. This multi-layered political approach to taxation can thereby contribute to a broader goal of sustainable destination development [146–149]. By striking a balance between promoting economic growth and preserving the environment, DMOs can navigate the complexities of different

political environments and tax structures. This, in turn, can help to optimize the use of tax revenues for the benefit of both the economy and the environment.

Overtourism presents another critical issue, with local taxes on tourists emerging as a tool to manage visitor numbers and fund local infrastructure [150,151] in places such as New Zealand (NZD \$35), Japan (JPY 1000), and Amsterdam (EUR 3 per person/night plus 7% on room charge). However, DMOs must implement these taxes to not deter tourism, which requires a delicate balance between generating revenue and maintaining destination attractiveness.

The rise of sharing economy platforms such as Airbnb and Uber has added an intricate layer to the already complex taxation milieu. As these digital platforms proliferate, the call for transparent, equitable taxation has grown louder, compelling active destination management to ensure compliance [140,141]. However, the digital nature of these services has also opened up avenues for potential tax evasion [152], posing a significant challenge to DMOs. A cooperative approach involving sharing economy platforms can prove advantageous in developing comprehensive regulatory frameworks, ensuring that these entities contribute equitably to the local economy.

A transformative shift is observed in the distribution of taxation revenue within the tourism industry. Tax revenues are increasingly aggregated into a communal fund rather than being funneled directly to DMOs. This pioneering strategy democratizes the allocation of resources, permitting a broader spectrum of stakeholders, including DMOs, local enterprises, and community organizations, to vie for funding. Consolidating tax revenue in such a way stimulates the support for a more diverse array of projects and initiatives, thereby fostering a more inclusive and cooperative tourism ecosystem that benefits a broader array of participants.

6.6. Consequences

The management of increasingly complex socio-technological systems that provide the data for decision making and support the coordination of large numbers of touchpoints, but also empower visitors to personalize their experiences, is forcing institutions at the destination level to grapple with outdated mandates, insufficient resources, and skill challenges among employees. Already in 2014, Pike and Page remarked on the fact that “very few DMOs have either the mandate or resources to effectively manage their destination” [10] (p. 204). This has been aggravated by the digitalization of visitor management and experience production, which goes well beyond the mission of traditional DMOs and requires the cooperation of public and private data producers who do not necessarily consider themselves part of the visitation process. The shift in the distribution of taxation revenue away from the control of the DMO and marketing purposes to a communal fund that can be used as a strategic tool for achieving broader economic, social, and environmental goals further weakens the institution of the DMO. Invested wisely, it can enhance the appeal of the destination to both visitors and residents but undermines the DMO in taking on the new challenges with which it is presented.

7. Discussion and Conclusions

The literature reviewed in the previous sections presents scholarly progress and suggests different challenges in four main sections: the definition of destinations, the big challenges (sustainability, resilience, and technology shifts), tourist demand and tourism supply, and the institutions of destination marketing and management. While the ‘consequences’ sub-sections outline specific unanswered questions for further research in each section, the purpose here is to integrate those different streams into six broader, concluding conversations to be had to advance research into the marketing and management of destinations. Table 1 summarizes the proposed conversations, provides links to the literature supporting them presented in the previous sections, and lists related questions to inspire future work.

Table 1. Six proposed conversations to advance the marketing and management of destinations.

Conversation	Questions for Future Work
<p>Space of flows A shift from a territorial perspective (amalgam) to a space of flows and spaces with different functionality implicates consequences for marketing and management. Sources: [27,35,38–40,42,43,49,137]</p>	What are the theoretical and practical consequences of the shift from a territorial to a space-of-flows perspective?
<p>Processes and actions High dynamic of developments as well as fragmentation and diversity of flows challenge existing processes and structures. Sources: [51,126,131,143]</p>	How does the governance design of destinations change to accommodate a focus on process and on action?
<p>Stewardship and collaboration Flows highlight the connection of actors, distribution of power and interests as well as lack of control over key processes with implications for collaboration. Sources: [75,131,132,137,145,148]</p>	How do new frameworks for destination management and governance enable stewardship and collaboration?
<p>Growth and resilience Managing the implications of short-term shocks and longer-term stressors and collaborating for resilience in fluid spaces presents new challenges. Sources: [64,65,74,79,80,134]</p>	How does the pursuit of resilience and adaptive capacity interact with fluid spaces and flexible forms of governance?
<p>Transient and permanent residents Traditional classifications of tourists vs. residents related to mobility, business licensing, or taxation have become increasingly difficult to uphold. Sources: [19,27,114]</p>	How does a focus on different types of residents inform processes of destination marketing, management, and governance?
<p>Digital transformation New instrumental technologies change key interactions with visitors, entail risk, potentially change flows, and the boundaries between the physical and virtual. Sources: [83,85,96,132]</p>	How do new instrumental technologies and associated behaviors interact with the concept and boundaries of destinations?

The first conversation concerns the nature of destinations as a phenomenon. The reviewed literature argues that the unit of analysis and research object has changed from a territory, usually delineated by administrative borders, to a network of connected points and trajectories along which travelers move. This signifies an *ontological shift from the amalgam to space of flows*. This entails that the phenomenon underlying destination management and marketing is co-determined by travelers and by what a particular space has to offer. Furthermore, this also entails a change in perspective. While traditional approaches use an inside-out perspective with a strong focus on territory and institutions, more recent works emphasize the complementary consequences of an outside-in perspective. Spaces offer different functionalities to living and doing business for both travelers and residents. It follows people as they pursue activities in order to understand what is necessary to develop and maintain livable spaces. Future work is encouraged to contribute to this conversation by exploring the myriad consequences of this shift. The following conversations provide some inspiration for potential issues worth exploring.

A second conversation calls for a *focus on processes and actions* instead of structures and institutions. The reviewed literature has argued for a high dynamic of developments combined with increasing fragmentation and diversity of visitor flows and service providers. Meeting this dynamic diversity in destination management and marketing could arguably benefit from agile collaborative processes and adaptive structures that enable networks of destination actors to accommodate rapidly changing exogenous and endogenous conditions. This would require that work units are increasingly specific, resourced projects instead of universal institutions. In that sense, budgets would follow processes and actions rather than institutions, and consequently, strategies would need to be developed for budget allocation and related processes. Future work is encouraged to study the governance design implications of the suggested process and action focus as well as interaction with connected regulation and policy for domains such as land use, transportation, and public infrastructure.

The third conversation argues to *prioritize stewardship and collaboration* over the classic notions of control. The recent focus on visitor flows highlights to a much greater extent the need for collaboration among traditional and non-traditional institutional actors in the tourism system to proactively address issues such as overtourism and the pressures on cultural and natural resources. Power has shifted to consumers largely with the aid of social media where inspiration comes from peers and influencers. At each step of the travel decision-making journey, their recommendations are often more trusted than official DMOs. Thus, the development of value propositions has become a co-creative process between suppliers and consumers. Instead of approaching destinations from a strategic marketing perspective by trying to create a one-size-fits-all image, brand, and positioning statement, there is a need to recognize that the fragmentation of both supply and demand should lead to a meta-design that engages visitors in co-designing their experiences. However, the present administrative framework of most DMOs hinder effectively addressing current market conditions and challenges. How alternative frameworks can enable stewardship and collaboration and link up with a focus on processes, activities, and variable spaces are interesting subjects for future research.

The conceptualization of a destination as a space of flows, albeit consistent with the actual behavior of tourists, adds to the complexity of their management. The same can be said about the ability of single DMOs to migrate *from a paradigm of growth to one driven by resiliency*, which is the focus of the fourth conversation. The multitude of short-term shocks and longer-term stressors evident over the past 15 years collectively serve as a catalyst for change, with destinations unable or unwilling to accommodate sustainable, regenerative, or more resilient forms of tourism unlikely to succeed in the longer term. The pent-up demand-driven tourism rebound post-COVID-19 has shown itself to be a rather short-term trend largely due to inflationary pressures faced by consumers as well as the anxiety and destabilization caused by wars and political unrest. Thereafter, the variable-geographic shape of future destinations necessitates more flexible and deeper forms of collaboration. DMOs are obligated to accept that the popularity of their historical 'within boundary' attractions is most likely to be part of a more mobile destination 'experience-scape'. Hence, rather than focus on the sustainability of singular destinations, research scrutiny ought to target the resilience and adaptive capacity of more fluid 'experience-scape' destinations as ecosystems or portfolios of diverse flows, and the more flexible and holistic forms of governance required to navigate and successfully manage the spatially dynamic destination of the future.

The fifth conversation concerns a *focus on transient and permanent residents*. In a destination, tourists are temporary residents. However, in contrast to the permanent resident population, they are mainly engaged in leisure and complementary activities such as shopping or using public transportation. As part of their leisure activities, permanent residents join temporary residents. They use the same facilities and engage in similar activities. In this case, permanent residents are temporary visitors, and with tourists, they add up to the grand total of visitors. The reviewed literature has illustrated that separating these groups has become increasingly difficult—especially when accounting for staycations and visiting friends and relatives travel. Traditional classifications related to mobility, business licensing, or taxation have become increasingly difficult to uphold. Future contributions to this conversation are thus encouraged to examine how a shift to different types of residents can inform processes in destination marketing, management, and governance.

The sixth and last conversation addresses *digital transformation* and a shift *from physical to hybrid and augmented experiences*. New instrumental technologies such as AI models have begun to change ways to interact with visitors and to enable new insights into consumer preferences, behaviors, and expectations. The pioneering efforts of online travel agencies, DMOs, and other tourism businesses integrate notions of 'smart tourism' as they tailor, improve, and augment their services and products. However, these technologies also entail significant risks. Unresolved concerns of a regulatory and ethical nature alongside skill and funding gaps in deploying these technologies in destinations are relevant areas

of future research. Finally, technologies such as VR, MR, XR, and AR enable the virtual augmentation of existing experiences and add new, personalized ones. Studies that explore how virtualization and augmentation change visitor flows, associated behaviors, and the definition of destinations by blending, suspending, or transcending the boundaries between the physical and the virtual will be valuable additions to this conversation.

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