Implementing smart tourism destination governance: the case of Naples

Roberto Micera, Luisa Errichiello and Rodolfo Baggio

Introduction

Starting with a methodological framework aimed at identifying a destination governance structure that can support a smart-oriented development strategy, this chapter discusses the potential of a place or tourism municipality for implementing a Smart Tourism Destination Governance (STDG) model. To illustrate the application of this framework, we consider the city of Naples, a prominent tourism destination in Southern Italy. The city was chosen because, starting in 2013, it was formally involved in several initiatives inspired by the "smart city and communities" paradigm. The main source of data for this study consists of in-depth qualitative interviews conducted by the first two authors with numerous local tourism stakeholders. Additionally, this primary source was complemented with secondary information obtained from official documents. The critical analysis of the results provided valuable insights into how contextual conditions of the tourism destination, particularly in terms of competitive positioning, collaboration attitudes among stakeholders, and a collective "smart orientation", are pivotal factors for the viability of a smart tourism destination governance model. These factors, in turn, significantly shape the specific trajectory of smart development.

The chapter is organized into five sections. Following the introduction, the second section presents the STDG model proposed by the authors, based on an extensive literature review. This model draws upon various managerial theories to understand tourism destination governance and places a central focus on the "smart paradigm" and its constituent dimensions. The third section details the research methodology and the rationale for selecting Naples as a relevant tourism destination within the Mediterranean basin. The fourth section presents the empirical findings from the case study. Finally, the last section delves into the discussion, emphasizing the implications for both theory and practice.

A process-based perspective of smart tourism destination governance: a theoretical framework

The Smart Tourism Destination Governance Process Framework, as proposed by Errichiello and Micera (2021), is the culmination of integrating insights derived from management theories, aimed at comprehending destination governance, with key dimensions essential for applying the "smart city and communities" paradigm to a tourism destination context. This conceptual framework identifies a set of rules and organizational mechanisms for coordination and integration, aligning them with an overarching development strategy designed to foster "smartness" in destinations by leveraging governance structures and mechanisms.

The framework serves as a bridge between fundamental concepts, encompassing destination governance and the smart paradigm. This is achieved through the integration of three research strands, specifically devoted to the smart city, the smart tourism destination, and smart governance. In the authors' view, the framework holds methodological significance, serving as a potential roadmap for understanding the evolutionary path involved in the complex process of creating and implementing tourism destination governance, with insights extending to its long-term maintenance. It underscores the importance of considering the local context to develop specific actions at each stage.

The STDG (Figure 1) is composed of five phases: Assembling, Ordering, Implementation, Evaluation, and Transformation. The assembling phase, in particular, includes four steps. The first step involves an analysis of the tourism destination's macro-environment. Traditional political, economic, socio-cultural, and technological factors are harmonized with the so-called "smart destination context" (Errichiello & Marasco, 2017; Marasco & Errichiello, 2016), taking into account specific conditions that could support the implementation of a smart development plan. This notably includes a shared smart orientation among relevant stakeholders. Identifying these conditions is of paramount importance since they inherently shape the potential development path of a given destination towards smartness from the outset (Boes et al., 2015).

The second step, "destination competitiveness", involves analyzing tourism demand and identifying the life cycle stage of the tourism destination (Butler, 2006; Kumar, 2016; Vargas-Sánchez, 2016). In this context, "smartness" extends the application of specific governance assets and resources initially proposed for the smart city (e.g., Ivars-Baidal et al., 2019) to the new domain of a tourism destination. This includes city infrastructures that facilitate collaboration, data exchange, service integration, communication, and enhance transparency in governance (Mooij, 2003; Odendaal, 2003). It encompasses financial resources (Kourtit et al., 2014), human assets (Lombardi et al., 2011), and intangible capital, all of which are pivotal for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth (Jovicic, 2016).

Notably, the competitive strength of a destination is also influenced by the different levels of control over these assets held by various stakeholders.

The third step, "destination stakeholder analysis", aims to identify and categorize the primary actors involved in the current tourism offering system, power distribution, and their interdependencies. In this context, scholars (e.g., Chourabi et al., 2012; Meijer et al., 2016) have stressed the importance of multi-stakeholder participation in governance processes, which continues to be a guiding principle even in the context of smart destinations. Unlike traditional settings, however, it becomes crucial to pay attention to new categories of stakeholders, such as private investors or local entrepreneurs and innovators engaged in smart open innovation projects.

Moving on to the fourth phase of the framework, "destination network analysis and partner selection", the literature on smart governance underscores the strategic role that citizens and tourists play in all phases of smart development (Castelnovo et al., 2015; Lalic & Önder, 2016). Simultaneously, implementing a smart tourism destination necessitates the involvement of universities, research centers, mobile network operators, trusted service providers, and banks, alongside more traditional stakeholders (e.g., tourists, residents, private tourism businesses). Moreover, a thorough network analysis can reveal the actual structural characteristics of a destination, as they emerge from the inherent self-organization processes of such a complex system (Baggio, 2011; Sainaghi & Baggio, 2017). This is especially relevant when considering the profound interactions that exist between the physical components and the digital systems typical of a smart destination (Baggio & Del Chiappa, 2014).

Research on smart tourism destinations has emphasized the need to create conditions that increase stakeholder engagement through incentives for collective participation and collaboration (Gretzel et al., 2016) and ensure widespread adherence to shared goals and strategic planning. Tourism management scholars have underscored Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) as suitable collaborative arrangements for the smart and effective governance of tourism destinations (Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2014; Gretzel et al., 2016; Gretzel et al., 2018). PPPs promote efficiency, support creativity, stimulate innovation (Heeley, 2011), and enable the sharing of complementary resources and expertise owned by private and public actors to enhance the knowledge potential of the entire destination (Crouch & Ritchie, 2005).

The second stage of the model, "Ordering", focuses on goal setting. During this phase, the emphasis shifts to issues related to sustainable development and the improvement of the quality of life and well-being for all citizens. Contributions on smart tourist destinations reinforce this citizen orientation by embracing a tourism-centric vision, assuming that tourists, as well as residents, professionals, and workers in the destination, experience the visit similarly.

Within the "implementation" phase of the framework, the primary goals involve identifying roles and coordination mechanisms. This includes setting up the most appropriate legal form for partnerships or determining the level of participation for each stakeholder in decision-making processes, as well as finding the balance between a top-down and a bottom-up approach. A "smart destination management organization" (DMO) plays a significant role in this phase. According to Gretzel et al. (2018), the DMO's role encompasses:

> "lobby and perhaps even partly sponsor the development of smart tourism infrastructure, curate and manage smart tourism data, facilitate the development and adoption of smart tourism-related applications within the digital business ecosystem, support tourists in learning and consuming smart tourism experiences, and finally, link smart tourism with overall quality of life and sustainability development goals".

In terms of fostering stakeholder participation and co-creating new tourism services, the literature widely refers to Living Labs in the context of smart cities and smart destinations (see Almirall et al., 2012; Boes et al., 2015; Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2014; Schaffers et al., 2011). Another essential tool on which any model of smart tourism governance should be based is the formulation of a formal smart tourism strategic plan, which should be established during the ordering stage. This plan should clearly and explicitly define all the strategies, policies, and actions necessary for the smart development process and communicate them to all parties involved in the governance process.

To develop an effective and efficient governance model, it is important to include a phase dedicated to result analysis (evaluation). Specific tourism-related indicators can be identified to measure the contribution of decision-making processes and communication to the sustainable management of the destination, the economic impact generated by tourism activities, as well as the socio-cultural and environmental impact of tourism.

The last stage of the framework, "transformation", involves the evolution of partnerships. Public actors are highlighted in the literature as key players who should foster cooperation and build a

growing, sustainable, and progressive dynamic among stakeholders, including citizens. Involving a variety of actors creates an environment conducive to open innovation processes, aimed at developing new products and services and improving existing ones, attracting new investments and entrepreneurial initiatives, and involving new stakeholders. The synergy between technologies and appropriate collaborative models offers opportunities for internal re-engineering of business processes, aligning with tourists' customization needs, supporting destinations in gaining a competitive advantage, and adopting sustainable development paths.

The framework is presented in Figure 1, which also outlines the influences and interactions of the different managerial theories that underpin the model's assumptions and content.
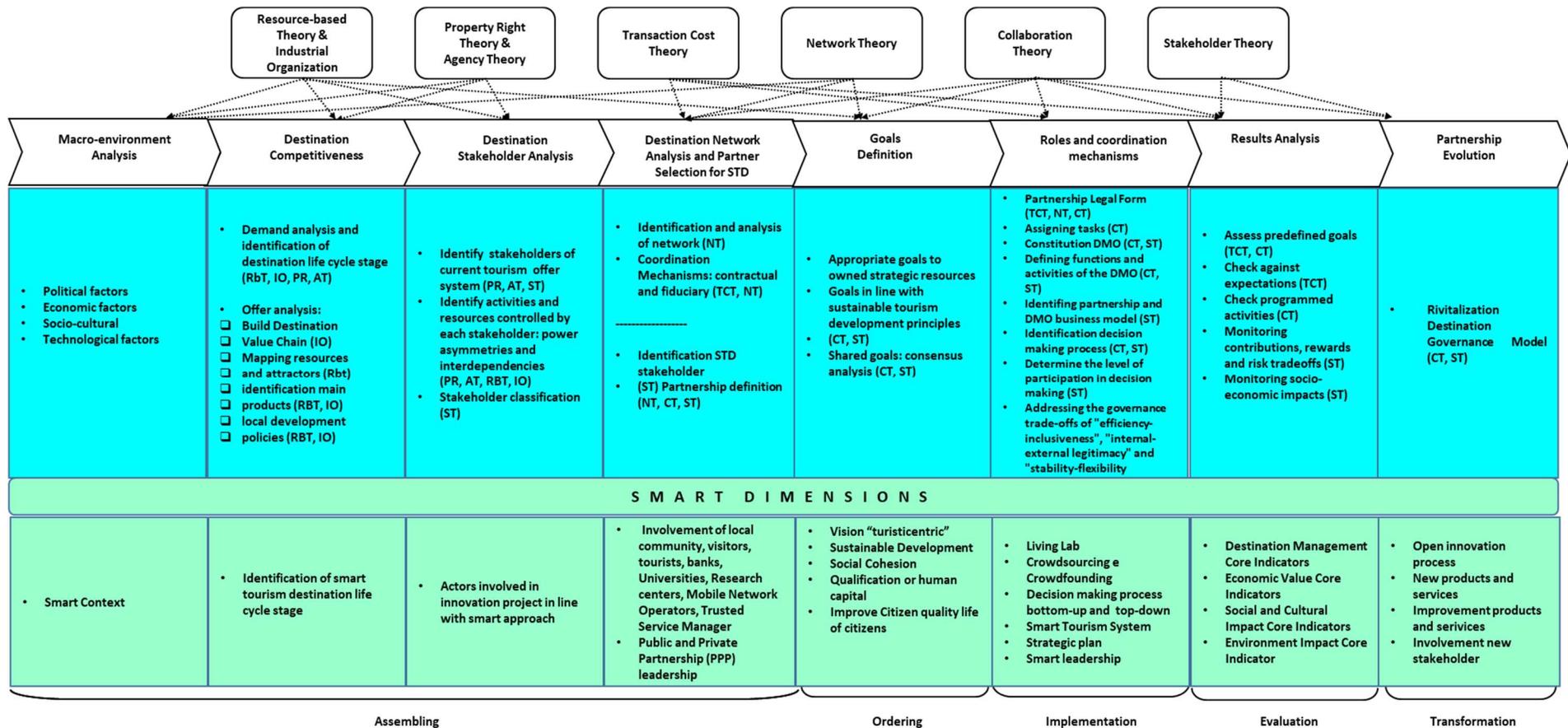
Figure 1. Smart Tourism Destination Governance Process Framework

Source: Errichiello and Micera (2021)

Theories (top): Resource-based Theory & Industrial Organization · Property Right Theory & Agency Theory · Transaction Cost Theory · Network Theory · Collaboration Theory · Stakeholder Theory

Macro-environment Analysis	Destination Competitiveness	Destination Stakeholder Analysis	Destination Network Analysis and Partner Selection for STD	Goals Definition	Roles and coordination mechanisms	Results Analysis	Partnership Evolution
• Political factors • Economic factors • Socio-cultural • Technological factors	• Demand analysis and identification of destination life cycle stage (RbT, IO, PR, AT) • Offer analysis: ❑ Build Destination ❑ Value Chain (IO) ❑ Mapping resources and attractors (Rbt) ❑ identification main products (RBT, IO) ❑ local development ❑ policies (RBT, IO)	• Identify stakeholders of current tourism offer system (PR, AT, ST) • Identify activities and resources controlled by each stakeholder: power asymmetries and interdependencies (PR, AT, RBT, IO) • Stakeholder classification (ST)	• Identification and analysis of network (NT) • Coordination Mechanisms: contractual and fiduciary (TCT, NT) ------------------ • Identification STD stakeholder • (ST) Partnership definition (NT, CT, ST)	• Appropriate goals to owned strategic resources • Goals in line with sustainable tourism development principles (CT, ST) • Shared goals: consensus analysis (CT, ST)	• Partnership Legal Form (TCT, NT, CT) • Assigning tasks (CT) • Constitution DMO (CT, ST) • Defining functions and activities of the DMO (CT, ST) • Identifing partnership and DMO business model (ST) • Identification decision making process (CT, ST) • Determine the level of participation in decision making (ST) • Addressing the governance trade-offs of "efficiency-inclusiveness", "internal-external legitimacy" and "stability-flexibility"	• Assess predefined goals (TCT, CT) • Check against expectations (TCT) • Check programmed activities (CT) • Monitoring contributions, rewards and risk tradeoffs (ST) • Monitoring socio-economic impacts (ST)	• Rivitalization Destination Governance Model (CT, ST)

SMART DIMENSIONS

Macro-environment Analysis	Destination Competitiveness	Destination Stakeholder Analysis	Destination Network Analysis and Partner Selection for STD	Goals Definition	Roles and coordination mechanisms	Results Analysis	Partnership Evolution
• Smart Context	• Identification of smart tourism destination life cycle stage	• Actors involved in innovation project in line with smart approach	• Involvement of local community, visitors, tourists, banks, Universities, Research centers, Mobile Network Operators, Trusted Service Manager • Public and Private Partnership (PPP) leadership	• Vision "turisticentric" • Sustainable Development • Social Cohesion • Qualification or human capital • Improve Citizen quality life of citizens	• Living Lab • Crowdsourcing e Crowdfounding • Decision making process bottom-up and top-down • Smart Tourism System • Strategic plan • Smart leadership	• Destination Management Core Indicators • Economic Value Core Indicators • Social and Cultural Impact Core Indicators • Environment Impact Core Indicator	• Open innovation process • New products and services • Improvement products and serivices • Involvement new stakeholder

Phases: Assembling | Ordering | Implementation | Evaluation | Transformation

Research method

To apply the proposed framework to the city of Naples, the empirical analysis was structured into two phases. The first phase was a desk phase, in which secondary data related to the macro-environment was collected, including an analysis of tourism demand and supply. The second phase was a field phase, involving the collection of information and opinions through qualitative interviews with key stakeholders in the tourism sector operating at the local level.

In-depth interviewing is a widely used technique for collecting various types of information and is a fundamental research method in the social sciences (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003). It involves structured and guided conversations with respondents to elicit specific information (Corbetta, 2003). For this analysis, the interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner, allowing for flexibility to capture the respondents' perspectives and obtain rich and in-depth answers. While the research approach followed a deductive path, starting from a framework based on constructs and principles derived from theory, the interviews also served to stimulate additional questions and potentially open the door to research topics for future projects.

Thirteen in-depth interviews were conducted by the first two authors with key informants and stakeholders in Naples' tourism system. These interviews aimed to gather information about the city's real potential for establishing a governance model aligned with the smart approach, as outlined in the STDG framework. Key informants were selected based on their roles as stakeholders in the city's tourism system and their knowledge and experience in tourism governance. A preliminary mapping of stakeholders, guided by the 6A model (Buhalis, 2000), helped identify the interview subjects, ensuring a sufficient degree of representation across different types of stakeholders, including public and private actors, trade associations, and companies representing various tourism services. The following stakeholder categories were identified for interviews:

- Institutional actors (three participants)
- Associations (three participants)
- Large operators (two participants)
- University, research, and consulting representatives (two participants)
- City and social associations related to culture and tourism (two participants)
- Innovative start-ups (one participant)

A detailed interview outline was prepared to guide the interviewer, ensuring that all relevant topics were covered and all necessary information was obtained. The outline established a framework within which the interviewer could determine the question order, wording, and topics to explore. The results of the analysis provided valuable insights for managers and policymakers seeking to develop a Smart Tourism Destination Governance (STDG) model for the city of Naples.

The case study of Napoli: an application of the STDG framework

Historical context: the development of Naples as a tourism destination

Since ancient times, dating back to Ancient Greece and the Holy Roman Empire, the Bay of Naples has been renowned for its rare natural beauty, making it a sought-after destination. Modern tourism in the city has its origins in the 18th century when Naples became a prominent stop on the Grand Tour. This trend continued into the next century, with Naples serving as the focal point for various tourist products and itineraries, such as the "Bay of Naples" offered by Thomas Cook (who even had a branch office in Naples) and the "Week in Naples" created by antiquities expert Mr. Russel Forbes. Toward the end of the 1800s, interest in seaside tourism began to grow, leading to the construction of large hotels and attempts to reduce the seasonality of demand by introducing services suitable for the winter period.

The Grand Tour marked the transition from a tourism linked to cultural, educational, mercantile, and religious motivations to a society in which mass tourism, with its new ideals and objectives, began to assert itself.

The airline industry introduced the first charter flights in the mid-20th century, and advancements in radio and TV broadcasting made information from around the world more accessible. While the 1950s witnessed further development of mass tourism and the emergence of new destinations, the city of Naples started experiencing a decline due to increasing decay. Consequently, efforts were made to revitalize the city by introducing new forms of cultural tourism and innovative tourism products to cope with the maturity phase that all the classic destinations in the Gulf of Naples were going through.

In recent times, Naples has been recognized as one of the main Italian cities of art. Visitors can explore the different historical layers of Naples, from the primitive Greek nucleus to the medieval city, the Swabian and Aragonese periods, and finally, the 19th and 20th-century city that extends to the Campi Flegrei.

A comprehensive analysis of the tourism potential of Naples requires considering other renowned locations in the Gulf, such as the Phlegraean area, the Vesuvian area, Torre del Greco, Torre Annunziata, the Sorrento Peninsula, and the islands of Capri, Ischia, and Procida. Each of these places

boasts specific attractions, including nature reserves, bathing and thermal resorts, archaeology, and unique landscapes. This broader perspective aligns with recent legal provisions on the Metropolitan City, which defines a vast and integrated territory where municipalities are interconnected in terms of infrastructure, social and economic dynamics, and cultural identity.

The metropolitan area of Naples encompasses approximately 1,171 km² and includes 92 municipalities. However, for the purpose of this analysis, the focus is primarily on the city of Naples as an independent destination capable of attracting demand (Della Corte, 2000). The city offers numerous attractions that serve as the basis for its main tourist products and the primary motivation for tourists to visit. In terms of accessibility, Naples has an international airport with connections to 62 scheduled destinations, both domestic and international, served by 28 airlines, including full cost, low cost, and low fare carriers.

An application of STDG framework process

In this section, we will delve into the results obtained from the comprehensive analysis of the information derived from the interviews. We will relate these findings to each of the stages comprising the "Smart Tourism Destination Governance Process" framework. Specifically, we will focus on the initial two steps of the assembling stage, which involve the "analysis of the macro-environment" and the "stakeholder analysis". Insights from the interviews will be combined with data obtained from secondary sources, such as official documents and information related to Naples. Throughout our discussion, we will emphasize the aspects of "smartness" that hold significance within the city's context.

Macro-environmental analysis

The interviews conducted provided valuable insights into the stakeholders' awareness of the "smart city" concept and their perceptions and judgments regarding its implementation for tourism enhancement in Naples. This encompassed their understanding of the concept, the effectiveness of initiatives inspired by the "smart city and communities" paradigm, and the potential for future development in this regard.

Overall, it is evident that all stakeholders are aware of the "smart city" paradigm. local institutions in Naples have taken some measures in response to the guidelines and recommendations provided by the European Union (EU) to encourage the adoption of the 'smart city' model as a framework for innovation and urban development. However, there is variation in the depth of their knowledge and their understanding of the concept's potential applications within the local context. Some stakeholders

offer a narrow and simplistic view, focusing on select elements and dimensions such as "sustainability", "innovation", "collaboration", "new services", or "technology". Others take a broader perspective, recognizing the holistic and complex nature of the concept, and the need for multi-faceted actions across various fields.

While acknowledging the initiatives and projects supported by the City of Naples, such as car sharing, bike sharing, and initiatives carried on under the Smart Cities and Communities Program initiatives promoted by the Ministry of University and Scientific Research, the consensus among stakeholders is that the results achieved thus far are somewhat limited, failing to deliver substantial benefits to citizens, tourists, and tourism businesses. Despite some small-scale smart development efforts initiated by the municipal administration, there is a consensus that there is still significant progress required to fully embrace a smart approach from a tourism perspective. Additionally, there is a shared belief that local institutions and businesses have not fully grasped the genuine opportunities presented by technology in this context.

Competitiveness of Naples City as a Destination

Considering the competitive positioning of Naples in the realm of tourism and its untapped potential, the link between the "destination competitiveness" aspect and the "smart city" paradigm primarily manifests through the stakeholders' perception of the city's stage of development concerning the adoption of a 'smart' approach. This, in turn, affects the extent to which initiatives and projects influenced by this approach impact the city's competitive positioning.

When focusing on the strategic resources that can be harnessed to enhance Naples' competitiveness as a tourist destination, the field analysis aligns with the findings from the desk analysis. The interviews reveal a unanimous recognition among relevant stakeholders of the enormous potential offered by the city and its heritage. Notably, the natural, landscape, and cultural resources are perceived as having the potential to activate various forms of tourism, including food and wine tourism, seaside tourism, cruise tourism, and cultural tourism. These resources can also support thematic tourism offerings such as "Naples as a city of culture" or "Naples as a city of tourism". Importantly, these assets are seen as attractive to a diverse range of traveler segments, including foreign tourists, especially those from emerging markets, travelers with disabilities, and budget-conscious tourists.

However, there is a widespread consensus among various stakeholders that this potential has remained largely untapped due to ineffective or, in some cases, non-existent tourism policy measures. Critical aspects that have surfaced include:

• Absence of medium to long-term planning;

• Inflexibility and short-sightedness of institutional policies;

• Uncertainty within the political-institutional framework, marked by significant discontent, which erodes trust in institutions among business actors;

• Prevalence of individualistic approaches;

• Insufficient top-down coordination for the integrated management of projects and initiatives;

• Excessive proliferation of associations without a common strategy and collaborative action;

• Allocation of funds to specific local events that fail to generate a significant impact on the territory in terms of tourism attraction (e.g., enhancing the city's tourism image) or increasing tourist demand.

Regarding the city's competitive positioning as a destination, the interviews corroborate what was found in the analysis of secondary sources. Additionally, stakeholders concur that Naples is positioned in the revitalization phase of its life cycle. This improvement is primarily attributed to the resolution of the "waste crisis" that had tarnished the city's image and contributed to reduced demand.

As for the connection between the destination life cycle and the adoption of the smart city paradigm in the city's tourism governance, interviews underscore that Naples' position in the revitalization phase is not significantly influenced by the actions of the Naples Smart City Association or the deliberate choice to embark on a process of smart urbanization for tourism enhancement. This result aligns with the widely held perception of limited adoption of the principles, models, and methods required for the city to become "smart". Consequently, the various stakeholders place the city in an embryonic phase of the evolutionary process toward becoming a Smart Tourism Destination.

The last aspect addressed pertains to the recommendations provided by the various interviewees regarding strategic guidelines, areas of intervention, and operational measures necessary to support the transformation into a smart tourism destination. This entails integrating the city's tourism revitalization efforts with its "smart city" initiatives to establish a synergistic development trajectory and align the destination's life cycle with the process of smart development.

Strengthening the city's competitive position necessitates a multifaceted approach. Key elements include the construction of new accommodation facilities to attract fresh investments and the

enhancement of existing ones, the revitalization and improvement of high-potential sites like Bagnoli, and the reimagining of Naples as a central hub for numerous neighboring locations such as Campi Flegrei, Telese, and Contursi Terme. Reception facilities, including stations and the port, must be upgraded, and the connection between the city and its coastline restored, allowing for the development of various tourism products. Efficient public transport and logistical links between the port area, the historic center, and other sites of artistic and cultural interest are essential to reestablishing the city"s relationship with its coastal strip. Additional measures encompass tailoring information services to tourists" needs, leveraging cruise tourism to support tourist visits, promoting archaeological sites as attractions, offering clear and straightforward tourist packages, prioritizing the utilization of well-known resources over less-recognized ones, increasing promotional activities targeting foreign tourists, developing a growth model based on shared strategies and interventions, and forming public-private partnerships, as exemplified by the city of Matera.

Some interventions can be directly attributed to the adoption of the "smart city"paradigm to support the smart development of the Naples destination. Specifically, smart resource development should encompass a range of actions, including efforts to:

• Enhance mobility and smart urban route planning;
• Support investments in infrastructure and enabling technologies, with a particular focus on Wi-Fi accessibility, which eliminates the need for apps or QR codes;
• Implement training programs aimed at enhancing knowledge of new technologies and their usage, with a focus on digital literacy, even among older tourists less accustomed to technology;
• Encourage the utilization of new technologies for the exploration of culturally significant sites, such as Pompeii.

Destination Stakeholder Analysis

The in-depth interviews conducted with selected informants served to complete the destination stakeholder analysis as envisioned by the "Smart Tourism Destination Process" framework. This allowed for the integration of information collected through secondary sources.

The interviews provided insights into the willingness of various stakeholders to engage in collaboration and the extent to which this collaboration has translated into tangible actions, including initiatives and projects. We also sought to understand the extent to which these actions are inspired

by a "smart" logic, even if they are not formally framed within "smart city"projects, to promote the intelligent development of Naples as a tourist destination.

Overall, the in-depth interviews revealed a positive attitude toward collaboration among the interviewees. Each interviewee disclosed their involvement in collaborative projects with other stakeholders in the local tourism system. Some interviewees provided more detailed descriptions of the purposes of these collaborations and the results achieved. However, while the number of interviews conducted is limited, it is evident that collaboration varies in nature among the interviewees. These variations encompass specific partners involved in the collaboration, the number of partners, the continuity and stability of the collaboration, and the role played by the interviewee within the collaboration.

It is worth noting that there are groups of stakeholders engaged in relatively stable forms of collaboration, while there is a lack of or minimal collaboration among actors in other groups. Taking accessibility services (port and airport) as an example, we can trace the nature and patterns of collaboration between the Port Authority, a non-profit public body, and GESAC (Naples International Airport), a public-private profit-making company. The Port Authority expressed its commitment to collaborating with key stakeholders in the city's tourism system, such as cruise lines, tourism departments, trade associations, the city council, and the chamber of commerce of Naples. However, data analysis indicates that the Port Authority primarily collaborates with two partners, namely the city council and the Chamber of Commerce of Naples. In one collaboration (dyad), the focus is mainly on promotional purposes, such as participating in fairs, while in the other collaboration (dyad), the aim is to provide information and reception services to tourists disembarking at the port of Naples.

In these collaboration forms, partners are primarily involved as "financiers", and the activation of collaboration occurs through specific short-term projects, often linked to the availability of funds. For the public Port Authority, "funding" plays a critical role in initiating partnerships, explaining the ad-hoc nature of these initiatives. GESAC's case demonstrates significant differences in the nature of collaboration and, more importantly, in the role played by this entity in the collaborative processes. These differences can be attributed to the public-private nature of the company, where private contributions translate into strategic vision, financial resources, specific expertise, managerial capabilities, and relational skills.

The interviews conducted with various stakeholders also revealed the establishment of a noteworthy form of collaboration exclusively involving private actors. This refers to the establishment of a Convention Bureau (CB) in September 2015, a network of businesses consisting of 27 companies, including hotels, travel agencies, event organizers, caterers, local transport companies, and GESAC. The CB's primary objective is to present the city with a unified conference offering. This network represents a private initiative, excluding, at least for now, the direct participation of public bodies, which play a facilitating/supporting/aggregating role. Public bodies include the CCIAA, the official headquarters of the CB, the Municipality of Naples, which is open to promotional activities, and the Mostra d'Oltremare, offering space for trade fairs. A memorandum of understanding was signed with the latter, emphasizing the obligatory nature of dialogue with CB members due to its control over strategic resources, such as meeting spaces, incentives, conventions, and event hosting facilities.

Importantly, the deliberate choice to exclude public bodies from this collaboration is primarily based on the shortcomings of prior similar attempts involving public participation. However, the involvement of public bodies and institutions is not categorically excluded; instead, it is viewed as a potential future step. Similarly, it is not ruled out that the business network's goals could be expanded in the future to leverage other tourism resources and create synergies between conference tourism and other tourism segments.

In terms of collaboration with local actors, challenges arise when attempting to establish agreements and initiate collaboration, particularly among hoteliers. These stakeholders often focus on direct market operations, adopting an individualistic approach with limited strategic vision or managerial skills. Lastly, it is essential to highlight the difficulties encountered in establishing a dialogue with local public bodies by the so-called "innovators", tourism technology developers, who, while not directly part of the tourism system, can significantly impact the destination's competitiveness and smart development through innovations in the form of new tourism and cultural services.

Destination network analysis and partner selection for a smart tourism destination

Despite the presence of an extremely fragmented system, with no strong and solid partnerships, there is a unanimous consensus among most of the actors involved in the city's tourism sector regarding their willingness to collaborate. They are committed to contributing to the creation of an integrated governance model. This potential partnership could involve entrepreneurs and operators in the tourism and cultural sector, as well as technology players, who are perceived as ready to participate in a shared, long-term development project.

While discussing the existence of ongoing forms of collaboration, some interviewees recognize the presence of small clusters of stakeholders interested in taking an active role in implementing a tourism governance model in the city. However, they acknowledge that the viability of this model depends on the presence of an influential entity capable of integrating and coordinating the collective efforts of all other actors involved in the process.

In this regard, some interviewees emphasize the need for public bodies and institutions to create a supportive framework for these partnerships. This framework should go beyond merely enacting laws or providing funding to address the occasional nature of most collaborative efforts in the city's tourism sector.

In the context of the discussions mentioned above, interviews revealed the emergence of notable new aggregation initiatives that, if effectively managed, have the potential to become integral components of a smart destination governance model. One such initiative worth highlighting is the recently established Convention Bureau Naples, as mentioned in the previous section. The Convention Bureau Naples serves as a central hub within the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) industry. It becomes the go-to point of reference for meeting planners, multinational corporations in scientific and medical fields, or professional congress organizers when they seek to organize events in the city of Naples. This network is composed of numerous Neapolitan tourism operators who are dedicated to promoting the MICE industry in the city.

As per the insights gathered from the interviews, the primary innovation of this organizational model lies in its ability to bring together companies from various trade associations, with an exclusive focus on private membership. According to the participating members, this diversity is a key strength of the initiative. Nevertheless, it is essential to consider the potential limitations of such an approach when viewed in the broader context of a destination governance model.

In the context of destination network analysis, it is important to highlight the significant role that the Chamber of Commerce plays in many partnerships. The Chamber of Commerce has not only been involved in joint projects with numerous stakeholders, including those who were interviewed, but it has also actively contributed to most of the partnerships aimed at developing tourism in the city of Naples.

Furthermore, despite the presence of various associations operating in tourism within Naples, even for similar types of activities, all the interviewees concur in regarding this diversity as a source of added value for integrated destination governance. According to their perspective, this diversity reflects a democratic and pluralistic approach that enables the inclusion of various viewpoints and demands, ultimately enriching and strengthening the entire system.

In the endeavor to design a smart governance model for the city of Naples, the consensus among all interviewees centers on the significance of bringing together a multitude of stakeholders, encompassing both public and private entities. This inclusive public-private partnership should serve as a platform for all those who can contribute to shaping a smart tourism system for Naples. The envisaged partnership needs to create the conditions for an evolving governance model - one that is dynamic, open, modular, and flexible, adaptable to changes in the competitive landscape.

Another crucial and frequently emphasized factor is that these stakeholders must not be bound solely to the transient nature of political office. This is considered an essential condition to ensure the continuity of strategic decisions made in the city's development.

It is important to highlight the legislative context in Italy, particularly the institution of the so-called "Local Tourist Poles" (LTP), which could be a suitable foundation for constructing a smart tourism destination governance model in the Campania Region. While the interviewees believe that such an entity could serve as a basis for integrated governance of the city's tourism system, they are also quite skeptical about its implementation. On one hand, there is a general consensus that the establishment of LTPs could be beneficial for medium to long-term planning. On the other hand, the main current challenge associated with implementing a governance structure based on LTPs is the absence of adequate regulations to guide its implementation. This lack of regulatory framework has contributed to a sense of inertia among many key stakeholders in the local tourism system. Consequently, it is felt that addressing these regulatory shortcomings should be a priority, and institutions, particularly the new regional council, bear a significant responsibility in this regard.

Goal definition

In terms of the objectives of the Smart Tourism Destination Governance model, as well as in the form of a PTL, the interviews help identify some key goals that should guide its operation. These include:

- System Building: the model should focus on building a cohesive and well-organized tourism system in the city. This implies better coordination and collaboration among various stakeholders to create a more effective and integrated approach to managing tourism;
- Sustainable Tourism Development: A major goal is to promote and facilitate a sustainable tourism development path for the city. this involves balancing the economic benefits of tourism with environmental and socio-cultural concerns, ensuring long-term viability;
- Increased Tourist Flows: another objective is to attract more tourists to the city. This would involve strategies to enhance the city's attractiveness and draw a larger number of visitors.

In support of the first point, one of the participants draws from their own experience to make the case for these objectives:

"To successfully implement a PTL or Smart Tourism Destination Governance model, it should function as a well-coordinated system that actively involves all relevant stakeholders and collects their input on specific issues. However, in practice, building such a system can be extremely challenging. The difficulty arises from the diverse interests of the various stakeholders and the complexities of bringing them together and maintaining their engagement. Furthermore, the process is complicated by factors such as differing levels of motivation, age, and energy among participants, as well as their affiliations with different groups and political parties. Creating a cohesive system requires addressing a wide array of viewpoints and issues concretely. Acting solely as a mediator is insufficient, as it does not grant full control over the process and the ability to influence it effectively".

The interviewees are in agreement regarding the importance of establishing a method to achieve the objectives of a Smart Tourism Destination Governance model. They emphasize the need for a medium- to long-term time frame and suggest that institutions should develop the necessary organizational and decision-making dynamism to implement such a model effectively. According to the interviewees, the specific objectives that a Smart Tourism Destination Governance model should pursue include:

- Qualification of Human Capital. Enhancing the skills, knowledge, and expertise of the workforce involved in the tourism industry. This is essential for providing high-quality services and experiences to visitors;

- Enhancement of Existing Tourism Products and Services. Improving and promoting the existing offerings, such as cultural sites, attractions, and accommodations, to make them more appealing and competitive;

- Development of New Products, Services, and Experiences:. Innovating and creating new tourism-related offerings and experiences that can attract a diverse range of tourists;

- Improving the Quality of Life of Citizens and Promoting Social Cohesion. Smart tourism initiatives should not only benefit tourists but also contribute to the well-being and satisfaction of local residents, fostering social cohesion and harmony within the community;

- Environmental Compatibility. Implementing sustainable practices and ensuring that tourism development is in harmony with the natural environment to preserve and protect local ecosystems;

- Economic Development. Stimulating economic growth, job creation, and increased revenue in the region through tourism-related activities and investments;

- Tourist-Centric Vision. Shifting the perspective of tourists as passive visitors to active participants in the destination, considering their needs, preferences, and experiences.

These objectives align with the principles of a smart approach, which seeks to leverage technology and innovative solutions to enhance the quality of life for both residents and visitors, promote sustainability, and drive economic development.

Roles and coordination mechanisms

In the context of identifying a legal form for a public-private partnership as the foundation for the city's Smart Tourism Destination Governance, two distinct hypotheses have emerged from the interviews:

1) Consortium. The majority of interviewees favor the idea of establishing a consortium. This concept envisions a public-private consortium configuration where a network of companies, including innovative start-ups, collaborates with public bodies such as the municipality, regional government, research institutes, and universities. This consortium would work together to shape and implement smart tourism strategies for the city;

2) Association of Associations. Another group of interviewees suggests the creation of an "association of associations". This would be a formal entity with the primary goal of defining the strategic guidelines for the development of tourism in the city. It would involve multiple associations representing various stakeholders in the tourism sector, working together to coordinate and steer tourism development efforts.

Both of these approaches aim to foster collaboration, bring together different stakeholders, and establish a structured framework for smart tourism governance in the city. The choice between a consortium and an association of associations may depend on the specific context, legal requirements, and the preferences of local stakeholders and institutions.

As for the functioning of the Smart Tourism Destination Governance (STDG) model, the interviews with stakeholders provide insights into the formal bodies that should regulate the consortium:

- Shareholders' Assembly. This assembly would be attended by all stakeholders who have subscribed to the consortium. It would serve as a forum for discussions and decision-making.
- Board of Directors. The board of directors, appointed by the assembly, would consist of a limited number of members, typically ranging from 3 to 7. This board would play a key role in managing the consortium and making decisions.

There is general consensus regarding the form of the partnership, but there are differing views on the number of actors who should be involved in the decision-making process. Some stakeholders favor a larger council with diverse representation from main associations and authorities, while others prefer a smaller, more streamlined structure with councilors representing specific social groups.

Regardless of the number of participants, stakeholders agree on the importance of having a motivated team of professionals to lead the destination governance model. Once the mission and vision are defined, this team of experts would be responsible for implementing development strategies for tourism in the city.

Sustainability is a significant factor, and the issue of the tourist tax is highlighted. Stakeholders believe that the tourist tax should be fully reinvested in tourism and can be supplemented by European funds and private investments to support economic development.

The interviewees emphasize the need for a key figure with the authority to guide stakeholders in building the partnership and directing the destination governance model in defining and implementing tourism development strategies for the city.

Another critical aspect is stakeholder engagement. Clear and uniform standards should be established to ensure effective communication, information sharing, and knowledge transfer throughout the organizational structure. Formal rules and procedures for role division, responsibilities, and power

distribution among stakeholders, along with a shared and formalized planning of interventions and monitoring of results, are considered essential. Transparency, trust, and mutual collaboration among partners are crucial components.

Stakeholders also stress the importance of involving citizens in the decision-making process through "participatory democracy". Citizens should be regularly informed about tourism development strategies, making them ambassadors of the city's welcoming atmosphere. Advanced technological tools, such as information and communication technologies (ICTs), are seen as essential for enabling participatory democracy, increasing collective awareness, fostering e-democracy processes, and encouraging citizen contributions to strategic development.

More broadly, ICTs are considered indispensable for optimizing the STDG model. They support information gathering, studies, and data analysis that improve the functioning of the tourism system. Advanced technological platforms can be adopted to manage tourist flows, integrate tourism offerings, set prices, and collect valuable statistics on demand and tourism trends. ICTs, including business intelligence and big data analytics, can help identify popular areas and tourism trends throughout the year. They play various roles in content, promotion, and creating a culture of welcome within the context of the STDG model.

Discussion and conclusions

The objective of this chapter is to explore the potential for a "smart" governance model in a destination, using the conceptual framework "Smart Tourism Destination Governance Process" by Errichiello and Micera (2021). This framework outlines a logical sequence for developing a smart-oriented tourism destination: Analysis of the macro-environment; Assessment of destination competitiveness; Stakeholder analysis; Network analysis and partner selection; Definition of objectives, roles, and coordination mechanisms; Evaluation of results and partnership evolution to establish destination governance. We applied this framework to the city of Naples, using a combination of literature analysis and in-depth interviews with key local stakeholders. The goal was to identify relevant stakeholders, coordination mechanisms, and ways to infuse "smartness" into destination governance.

From an empirical standpoint, this study contributes novel insights into the development of smart tourism destination governance models. While previous research has highlighted the significance of smart tourism destinations in enhancing the overall visitor experience and bolstering destination

competitiveness (Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2014; Errichiello & Micera, 2017; Shafiee et al., 2019), this study delves into the distinctive challenges and opportunities in crafting governance models specifically tailored for such destinations.

The concept of a "smart" destination is closely aligned with the broader notion of smart cities, which emphasizes the use of technology and data-driven decision-making to enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors (Lamfus et al., 2015; Mandić & Praničević, 2019). However, the transition to a smart tourism destination is not just about adopting new technologies; it also involves collaborative efforts and integrated governance to ensure sustainable development (Ivars-Baidal et al., 2023).

When applying the proposed framework to a specific destination, it is crucial to consider the broader macro-environment in which the destination operates. This includes the destination's life cycle stage and its readiness for implementing a "smart" approach. Our analysis of Naples revealed that the city is in a phase of revitalization within its life cycle. However, it has not fully harnessed its tourism potential, which encompasses a rich heritage, including landscape, culture, food, wine, sea, and cruise tourism. The primary hindrance to unleashing this potential is the absence or inadequacy of tourism strategic plans. Therefore, the critical need is to invest in basic infrastructure (e.g., accommodation), enhance support services (e.g., logistics, transport, reception), and define effective marketing strategies. Without these foundational elements, smart development efforts risk remaining isolated and ineffectual.

Naples is in the early stages of smart development. Initiatives and projects from a smart city perspective are fragmented and managed independently, primarily due to the public sector's inability to grasp the opportunities presented by this paradigm. The lack of investment in open collaboration, support for start-ups, technological innovation, and an unprepared tourism sector exacerbates this issue.

The case study highlights that a destination's readiness for smart governance is not solely determined by technological infrastructure but also by the ability of local stakeholders, both public and private, to grasp the advantages of open collaboration, support for innovation, entrepreneurship, greater involvement of citizens in the process of tourism governance and better information management (Santos-Júnior et al., 2021; William et al., 2020).

The lack of public sector credibility in Naples due to issues like inadequate managerial capacity and a lack of innovation culture underscores the relevance of the public sector in smart tourism governance. While smart governance encourages collaboration and partnership, this case underlines the significance of effective public-private collaboration and the credibility of public bodies. The implications are consistent with existing research highlighting the role of public sector support and leadership in smart tourism initiatives (Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2014; Mandić & Kennell, 2021).

Mapping the destination's stakeholders and analyzing their relational patterns underscored the importance of sustainable, multi-stakeholder tourism governance for smart city development. While there is a positive attitude towards collaboration among the limited number of stakeholders involved, the critical issue lies in the prevalence of closed, ad-hoc partnerships (dyads and triads) that lack long-term strategic planning. The study brings to the fore the existence of distinct, often insular, groups of stakeholders engaging in extemporaneous collaborative projects. This aligns with existing smart tourism literature that emphasizes the significance of multi-stakeholder engagement, pointing at the need for integrated, collaborative governance models that transcend traditional boundaries, based on shared objectives and long-term strategic planning (Xiang et al., 2015; Lamsfus et al., 2016; Başer et al., 2019).

A notable feature of the Naples case is the Convention Bureau (CB), an innovative aggregation form that unites a diverse array of local tourism industry players. The private nature of the CB underscores the prevailing sentiment among private actors, which emphasizes the need for increased public sector credibility. The public sector's perceived deficiencies in managerial capacity, innovation culture, and excess bureaucracy is a significant barrier to previous attempts at larger-scale aggregation.

While the CB is a prominent bottom-up initiative supporting collective action and shared goals, various other bottom-up initiatives exist, driven by citizens' associations and local entrepreneurs. These initiatives alone are insufficient if the public sector remains a stumbling block to inclusive governance models, as prescribed by regional laws. To regain credibility with the private sector, the public sector must commit to clarifying regulatory content, legal forms, operational modalities, and representation boundaries.

With regard to a hypothetical smart-oriented governance model for Naples, in-depth interviews explored various aspects of its implementation. These include the actors to involve, objectives to achieve, and roles and mechanisms for coordinating partners in the collective decision-making process.

In summary, the authors contend that, beyond specific findings, the framework provides a functional tool for defining or redefining efficient and effective governance for a complex ecosystem known as a smart tourism destination. Destination managers should invest in the development and enhancement of basic tourism infrastructure and services, such as accommodation, transport, and logistics, to meet the needs of smart tourists and improve the overall visitor experience. It would be crucial to develop and implement comprehensive tourism strategic plans that align with the principles of smart tourism destination. These plans should be forward-thinking, addressing long-term objectives and focusing on the sustainable development of the destination. The DMO should actively seek collaboration with various stakeholders, including local businesses, associations, and public entities, to create integrated smart governance models. However, the critical perspective reveals significant challenges and barriers that must be addressed to realize this vision effectively. In this regard, a cultural shift is necessary to exploit the potential of smart tourism effectively. In detail, a culture of innovation, open collaboration, and a smart approach should be promoted among destination managers and stakeholders. In order to overcome fragmentation and individualistic-approaches, effective communication, information sharing, and knowledge transfer should be established at all levels of the governance structure. This will ensure that all stakeholders are informed and can actively contribute to decision-making. Since transparency and clear guidelines are crucial for successful smart governance the set-up of a legal framework, with formalize rules, procedures, and protocols for partnership, collaboration, and planning would be required next to encouraging citizen participation and engagement in the development of the destination so that they cat as "ambassadors" for the destination, enhancing its appeal and value.

Overall, these implications, informed by previous research in smart tourism and destination governance, provide a roadmap for creating successful smart tourism destinations.

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Rodolfo Baggio has a degree in Physics and a PhD in Tourism Management. He is professor at the Master in Economics and Tourism and Research Fellow at the Dondena Centre for Research on Social Dynamics and Public Policy at Bocconi University, Milan, Italy. His teaching and research activities are centered on the use of information technology in tourism and on the interdisciplinary applications of complexity and network science methods to the study of tourism destinations.

Roberto Micera is Assistant Professor (Italian RTD-B) in Management at University of Basilicata, where he teaches Territorial Marketing and Strategic Management. He is Senior Researcher at National Research Council of Italy (CNR-ISMed). He holds a Master in Economics of Tourism at the University Bocconi in Milan and the Ph.D. in Business Science at the University of Naples Federico II. He has been involved in many research projects on management of tourism destination and tourism firms.

Luisa Errichiello, Eng., Ph.D., is Senior Researcher at the Institute for Studies on the Mediterranean (ISMed) of the National Research Council of Italy (CNR). Her main research interests concern organizational innovation and the interplay between technology adoption and organizing processes within firm and networks. She published in leading journals, including Journal of Information Technology, European Management Review, International Journal of Tourism Research and Journal of Sustainable Tourism.