

# TRENDS AND ISSUES WITH REGIONAL TOURISM PARTNERSHIP FORMATION

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## **Introduction**

A tourism region is a “a geographically-delineated area where there is an agreement to develop and/or market tourism, or to engage in other forms of tourism partnerships. The area may be within an individual country or span multiple countries (cross-border tourism). The regional tourism agreement can be through legislation or inter-governmental treaties or may be a more informal cooperation approach” (Morrison, 2022). The research about partnering stretches back to the 1980s, although practical partnering applications predate the academic publishing.

Why are regional development and regional cooperation required in tourism? First, when considering tourism development within one individual local tourism region the reason is usually to grow the economy and improve the social conditions of local people. This is particularly important for rural and other economically-disadvantaged areas. When the development covers multiple regions or countries, there is a need to coordinate and integrate tourism policy, planning, development, and marketing. Second, there are several reasons for and benefits from regional cooperation in tourism development, marketing, and other partnerships. The synergy that results provides the participants with more than they would have by going it alone. The following are eight specific reasons for regional tourism partnerships:

- Adding to budgets
- Enhancing images and branding
- Giving better customer service
- Having a shared presence
- Increasing market appeal
- Providing new target market opportunities
- Sharing research and other information
- Tackling social responsibilities

In addition to these benefits, there are other motivations for seeking to cooperate across borders. For example, Kozak and Buhalis (2019) suggest that “*cross-border collaboration has become more valuable particularly for destinations that have had long-standing disputes in political relations but now seek peace. They are often forced to collaborate and develop economic and political bridges, developing friendships on the way.*” These two authors analysed potential partnering between Greece and Turkey. Other authors have examined other regions where there prior political and civil differences (e.g., Kennell et al., 2019; Lagiewski, 2004).

Despite the many reasons for regional cooperation, there are issues and challenges in forming such alliances and there have been failed attempts to partner and situations where the results were disappointing. It is worthwhile, therefore, to determine the common barriers and challenges to regional cooperation.

There are substantial contributions to the literature on partnering and collaboration in business in general, although much less has been written about partnering in tourism. The early contributions by Kanter (1994) and Dent (1999) are highlighted later in this chapter. Sullivan & Warner (2017) and Nahm (2021) are more contemporary contributions on strategic alliances and collaborative advantage, respectively.

Having introduced the topic and outlined the influential contributions so far, the principal objectives of this chapter are to: 1) describe the recent growth trends in regional tourism partnerships globally; 2) identify barriers to regional approaches to tourism and elaborate on issues and challenges associated with regionalisation in tourism; 3) examine the roles of various stakeholders in regional tourism collaborations; 4) consider potential contributions of regional tourism partnerships to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and 5) elaborate of future trends expected in regional tourism partnerships.

### **Recent trends and growth in regional tourism partnerships**

There are five major recent trends associated with regional tourism partnerships which correspond with the acronym of GUESS – growth (G), universal (U), e-marketing (E), sustainability (S), and scope (S).

#### ***Growth***

The number of regional tourism partnerships has increased, although that growth has been gradual rather than rapid. Table 12.1 provides a sample of 15 regional tourism partnerships from across the world.

*Table 12.1* Selection of regional tourism partnerships

<b>Regional tourism partnerships</b>	<b>Countries and description</b>
<b>Asia</b>	
GMS - Greater Mekong Subregion <a href="http://www.GreaterMekong.org">www.GreaterMekong.org</a> MTCO - Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office <a href="http://www.MekongTourism.org">www.MekongTourism.org</a> <a href="http://www.DestinationMekong.com">www.DestinationMekong.com</a>	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, PR China (Yunnan, Guangxi), Thailand, Viet Nam  Set up in 2006 by the GMS member countries with assistance by the Asian Development Bank (ADB).
Silk Road - managed by the UNWTO World Tourism Organization <a href="https://silkroad.unwto.org">https://silkroad.unwto.org</a>	Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, PR China, Croatia, DPR Korea, Rep. Korea, Egypt, Georgia, Greece, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Montenegro, Pakistan, Romania, Russia, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan  The UNWTO Silk Road Programme is a collaborative initiative designed to enhance sustainable tourism development along the historic Silk Road route.
<b>Australia and Pacific</b>	
SPTO – South Pacific Tourism Organisation <a href="http://www.southpacificislands.travel">www.southpacificislands.travel</a>	American Samoa, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Nauru, Marshall Islands, New Caledonia, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Wallis & Futuna, Rapa Nui, and the People’s Republic of China  Established in 1983 as the Tourism Council of the South Pacific. In addition to its 21 Government members, the SPTO has about 200 private sector members.
<b>North, Central and South America, and Caribbean</b>	
Travel South USA <a href="https://industry.travelsouthusa.com/">https://industry.travelsouthusa.com/</a>	Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia  Travel South USA is the official regional destination marketing organization for the southern United States. The non-profit organization promotes travel to and within its member states.
ACAT - Atlantic Canada Agreement on Tourism <a href="http://acat-etra.ca/">http://acat-etra.ca/</a>	New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island  The ACAT drives growth in the sector by promoting travel to Atlantic Canada through research-driven marketing campaigns and activities in key international markets such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, as well as to select markets within Canada.
COTAL - Confederación de Organizaciones Turística de América Latina <a href="https://www.cotalamerica.org/">https://www.cotalamerica.org/</a>	Argentina, Aruba, Belize, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, , Venezuela, and Mexico  COTAL was formed in 1957 and is a non-profit organisation bringing together all of the national travel agency associations in Latin American countries.
CATA – Central America Tourism Association <a href="http://www.visitcentroamerica.com/en">www.visitcentroamerica.com/en</a> <a href="https://www.catatourismagency.org">https://www.catatourismagency.org</a>	Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and Dominican Republic  CATA is a non-profit international organization based in Madrid, Spain and with a sub-headquarters in El Salvador.
CTO - Caribbean Tourism Organization <a href="http://www.onecaribbean.org">www.onecaribbean.org</a>	Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Guadeloupe, Martinique and St. Martin, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Aruba, Bonaire, Curacao, St. Eustatius, St. Maarten, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Montserrat, Turks and Caicos Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S Virgin Islands  CTO, established in 1989, is the region’s tourism development agency.

<b>Africa</b>	
RETOSA – Regional Tourism Office of Southern Africa <a href="http://www.retosa.co.za/">http://www.retosa.co.za/</a>	Angola, Botswana, DR Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe  The Regional Tourism Organization of Southern Africa (RETOSA) is a Southern African Development Community (SADC) body responsible for the Promotion and Marketing of Tourism in the region.
<b>Europe</b>	
Alp Net <a href="http://www.alp-net.eu">www.alp-net.eu</a>	Germany, Switzerland, Austria, and Italy  Ten of the leading tourist organizations in the Alps have decided to collaborate to further developing and boosting sustainable Alpine tourism
BTC – Baltic Sea Tourism Center <a href="http://www.bstc.eu">www.bstc.eu</a>	Germany, Denmark, Poland, Lithuania, Finland, and Sweden  BTC was established to jointly improve competitiveness for a sustainable tourism in the Baltic Sea Region.
ETC – European Travel Commission – <a href="https://etc-corporate.org">https://etc-corporate.org</a>	Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Switzerland  Established in 1948, the European Travel Commission is a unique association in the travel sector, representing the National Tourism Organizations of the countries of Europe. Its mission is to strengthen the sustainable development of Europe as a tourist destination.
RCC - Regional Cooperation Council <a href="https://www.rcc.int/tourism">https://www.rcc.int/tourism</a>	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Kosovo  The EU funded (EUR 5 million) and RCC implemented Tourism Development & Promotion project works to create joint and internationally competitive cultural and adventure tourism offers in the six Western Balkans (WB6) economies which will attract more tourists to the region, lengthen their stay, increase revenues, and contribute to growth and employment.
V4 - Visegrad Group <a href="https://www.visegradgroup.eu">https://www.visegradgroup.eu</a> Discover Central Europe - European Quartet <a href="http://www.discover-ce.eu">www.discover-ce.eu</a>	Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia  The European Quartet, otherwise known as the Visegrad Four (V4), has been working together to ensure long-term success in fields of common interest, through continued and reinforced internal co-operation.
DCC - Danube Competence Center <a href="http://www.danubecc.org">www.danubecc.org</a>	Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova, and Ukraine  The Danube Competence Center (DCC), based in Belgrade, is a Danube focused association of tourism actors for a sustainable and competitive destination Danube, supported by GIZ.

### *Universality*

Regional tourism partnerships are now present on all continents of the world, so this trend is universal. Table 12.1 provides examples from Africa, Asia, Europe, Caribbean, North and South America, and Central America; however, there are also partnerships in the Middle East (e.g., through the Gulf Cooperation Council). These types of partnerships are pervasive, and all regions and nations recognise their potential benefits.

### ***E-marketing***

The usage of ICTs and e-marketing is another noteworthy trend in regional tourism partnerships. Online collaboration is appropriate given customer preferences and also because it removes barriers of physical geography that can constrain the activities of regional tourism partnerships.

### ***Sustainable development and sustainable tourism***

Regional partnerships being viewed as a pathway to more sustainable tourism is another recent trend. The Experience Mekong Collection is a particularly good example of this trend: “*The Experience Mekong Collection (EMC) is a curation of small businesses and social enterprises that display travel experiences that are both sustainable and responsible in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS)*” (Thraenhart, 2022).

Several scholars have analysed the potential contributions of partnerships to sustainable development and sustainable tourism. For example, Graci (2013) studied multi-stakeholder collaboration with certain islands in Indonesia that resulted in the creation of an NGO, the Gili Eco Trust. Dunets, Ivanova, & Poltarykhin (2019) considered the contribution of tourism partnerships to the sustainable development of a transborder mountain region in Russia, Mongolia, China, and Kazakhstan. El-Khadrawy, Attia, & Rashed (2022) examined several cases in Botswana, Egypt, Jordan, Mexico, and Saudi Arabia on how partnerships were contributing to the sustainable tourism development of cultural heritage sites.

### ***Scope***

It is accurate to say that the traditional focus on tourism partnerships has been from the perspectives of marketing and branding (Kozak & Buhalis, 2019; Morrison, 2019), and economic growth and development (Hampton, 2009). However, the scope of regional tourism partnerships is continuously expanding. Shared interests are the core of the attraction of forming partnerships. Morrison (2019) outlined several bases (or shared interests) on which regional partnerships can be grounded and these include: 1) similar resources; 2) contiguous or similar locations; 3) similar markets; and 4) shared challenges and problems (Figure 12.1). Greater attention of late has a focus on shared challenges and problems. For example, Jiang & Ritchie (2017) discussed disaster collaboration in the context of cyclones in Australia. Shrestha, R.

K., & Decosta, P. L. (2021) examine how partnerships and collaboration in Nepal can help in overcoming the problems caused by COVID-19.

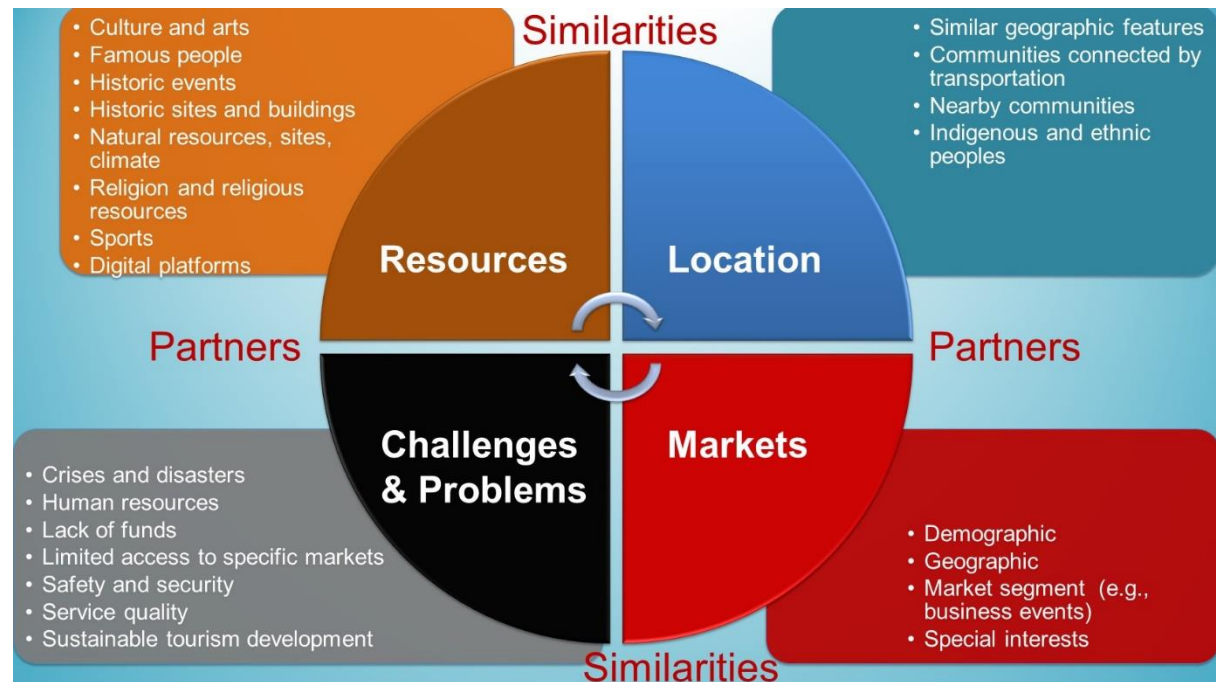


Figure 12.1 Partner identification wheel (updated from Morrison, 2019).

There is increasing attention to regional tourism partnerships based on similarities of locations and resources in the context of Indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities. Gao et al. (2019) looked at cross-border tourism and partnerships based on the ethnic minorities in Yunnan Province and Myanmar. Tham, Ruhanen, & Raciti (2020) reviewed the partnerships linking Indigenous and ethnic minority peoples across Asia and the Pacific.

Other evidence of the increasing scope for regional tourism partnerships include joint efforts in the better handling of solid waste in Thailand (Jotaworn et al., 2021) and how improved child welfare can be achieved through Indigenous tourism partnerships in Canada (Huneault & Otomo, 2020).

### Catalysts of regional tourism partnerships

The chapter introduction cited eight specific reasons for forming regional tourism partnerships and these are among the main catalysts. The ability to conveniently accomplish joint objectives and tasks online has also pushed greater regional tourism cooperation through shared websites and social media marketing. Government agencies, NGOs, and multilateral development banks are advocates of regional

tourism partnerships and are providing the financial and technical support to sustain these collaborative efforts.

In addition to the business case for partnering and the influence of technology and institutional support, recent crises and disasters have convinced partners to form closer alliances. This was certainly the case in 2020-2022 when all found themselves in the same predicament of severely reduced business volumes.

### **Successful cases in regional tourism partnerships**

There are many successful regional tourism partnerships around the globe as can be attested by their longevity.

#### ***Wild Atlantic Way***

The Wild Atlantic Way (WAW) encompasses the coastline and hinterland of the nine coastal counties of the West of Ireland – Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo, Mayo, Galway, Clare, Limerick, Kerry and Cork. The route itself stretches for almost 2,500 kms. from the village of Muff on the Inishowen Peninsula in County Donegal to Kinsale in West Cork. In addition, a number of urban centres have been identified as gateways to the Wild Atlantic Way, namely, Cork, Killarney, Limerick, Ennis, Galway, Westport, Sligo, Donegal and Letterkenny, as accommodation hubs (Sweeney, 2018).

The WAW was initiated in 2010-11 primarily as a regional branding approach by Ireland's national government tourism development agency, Fáilte Ireland. WAW is a self-driving route.

#### ***Experience Mekong Collection***

The Experience Mekong Collection showcases responsible and sustainable travel experiences in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS). Our Mekong Tourism Advisory Group (MeTAG), made up of tourism professionals active in responsible tourism in the GMS endorse all nominations. The region is comprised of the six countries bordering the Mekong River: Cambodia, PR China (Guangxi and Yunnan provinces), Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam.

“The Experience Mekong Collection“, is an initiative by Destination Mekong, showcases responsible and sustainable travel experiences in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS). Our Mekong Tourism Advisory Group (MeTAG), made up of tourism professionals active in responsible tourism in the GMS endorse all

nominations” (Mekong Tourism, 2017).

### **Prerequisites, barriers and challenges for regional tourism partnerships**

Kozak and Buhalis (2019) identified 12 prerequisites for cross-border destination marketing. These were trust, politics, product, marketing, distribution, accessibility, organisational cooperation, facilitation, planning, education, economic benefits, and socio-cultural benefits. McComb et al. (2017, p. 291) suggest conditions for effective stakeholder collaboration in tourism that include identifying all legitimate stakeholders, involving stakeholders throughout the partnering process, active participation of all stakeholders, stakeholders believing their participation has the potential to influence decisions, and others.

These prerequisites and conditions can also present potential barriers and challenges to forming regional partnerships. The presence and absence of mutual trust is particularly crucial in this respect (McComb et al., 2017). There are macro-level and individual level barriers and challenges to the formation of regional tourism partnerships and some of these are now discussed.

Politics and recent histories of conflict can pose significant barriers to regional tourism cooperation. For example, Kennell et al. (2019) reviewed regional tourism partnering in the WB6 countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia). Among the partnering issues that were found with this region were the following three (Kennell et al., 2019, p. 6):

- *Political issues, illegal migration, and terrorism have already made an impact on the tourism industry worldwide, and especially in the WB6 region.*
- *The region is historically known for many unresolved political issues that have been the source of tensions between neighbouring economies. Moreover, since 2015, many WB6 economies have also attracted negative attention due to civil protests against governments.*
- *From 2015, the region became one of the main migratory paths into the European Union, known as the Western Balkan Route. However, the number of illegal border crossings on this route has been falling steadily.*

Apart from macro-level barriers, competitiveness and independence are two major barriers to cooperation and collaboration in tourism, and they are deeply ingrained in this economic sector. According to Kirillova et al. (2020) “*tourism collaboration in its*

*pure form is rarely observed because destinations tend to be excludable and rivalrous*". The authors have personally experienced failed attempts to form regional partnerships for these reasons and others. Often, this was because stakeholders had other agendas and partnering was not a high enough priority for them.

Azazz, Elshaer, & Ghanem (2021) found that the main stakeholder opposition (in Egypt) to public-private partnerships was a result of the lack of satisfactory values or benefits, limited relational strength among stakeholders (mistrust, lacking commitment and support and unfriendly environment), and lack of technical knowledge and expertise.

For partnering to occur, there must be a willingness at the organisational and individual decision-maker levels. This point is not always obvious from reviewing the scholarship on tourism partnerships; however, it is certainly noticeable on the ground in the real world of tourism. Often, the major benefits from partnering do not emerge rapidly; they require longer-term commitments to be fully realised. Also, there can be perceptions that uneven levels of benefits will accrue from partnerships and that some partners will gain significantly more than others (e.g., smaller players will gain more than larger ones). Leaders of organisations may be more interested in building legacies in the shorter term or may be unwilling to enter a partnership with perceived uneven benefits. It also needs to be acknowledged that individual personalities influence readiness to engage in partnerships and other long-term relationships (Dent, 1999).

### **Stakeholder interests and roles**

The collaboration of various stakeholders is essential for successful regional tourism partnerships (McComb, Boyd, & Boluk, 2017). All stakeholders should share an interest in establishing such partnerships as each has the potential to benefit from collaboration. In principle, everyone should win, and no one should lose through partnering.

### ***Tourists***

Tourists undoubtedly are the beneficiaries from effective regional tourism partnerships as these groupings generate new offers such as experiences, packages, themed trails and routes, travel information, and access. However, it is even more desirable that tourists be invited to co-create travel experiences and other activities,

products, and services.

### ***Tourism industry***

Partnerships can bring new customers and revenues for tourism businesses, and this represents a major incentive for partnership participation. The active involvement of the tourism industry in regional tourism partnerships is usually a must, as they deliver the experiences, services and products to visitors.

### ***Community residents***

The involvement of social enterprises, such as in the case of the Experience Mekong Collection, and the promotion of community based tourism (CBT) projects are two ways in which regional tourism partnerships benefit community based residents. As with tourists, residents should also be involved in co-creating new experiences and activities, services and products.

### ***Government***

Government agencies are often the instigators of regional tourism partnerships as was the case with Fáilte Ireland with the Wild Atlantic Way. The public sector also is frequently a major funder of such partnerships (Zapata & Hall, 2012). Governments are called upon to facilitate cross-border travel and infrastructure provision, establish regional standards and quality assurance schemes, facilitate capacity development and training, support tourism planning efforts, and harmonise policies. Governmental DMOs usually are involved in the marketing and branding of regional tourism partnerships as well.

### ***NGOs and the environment***

NGOs are often involved in the formation of regional tourism partnerships. For example, the Danube Competence Centre was supported by GIZ, the German international development agency. Multilateral development banks, including the Asian Development Bank, are other agencies sometimes called in to provide monetary support for regional tourism partnerships, as ADB did in the Mekong partnership.

Although a “silent” stakeholder, the environment usually plays a significant role in regional tourism partnerships by providing a focal point for collective priority and action. This is demonstrated in the following description of how partnerships can potentially contribute to the SDGs.

## **Potential contributions to SDGs**

There is a substantial amount of attention being paid to the potential contribution of tourism partnerships to the achievement of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A 2019 conference held in New Zealand concluded there was a "need for diverse actors to work in partnership to achieve the SDGs" (Scheyvens & Cheer, 2021). Several scholars have taken up this call; for example, Ferrer-Roca, Guia & Blasco (2020) examined how cross-border partnerships in a region of Spain and France could help achieve the SDGs there. Movono & Hughes (2020) examined the SDGs from the perspective of two community-focused tourism businesses in Fiji, focused on SDG 17 to explore how partnerships between tourism businesses and local community stakeholders supported local development. Hughes & Scheyvens (2021), using Fiji as their case study, considered how partnerships among hotels, their guests, and local communities helped with SDG attainment.

These scholars have considered the contributions of partnerships to a variety of the SDGs and particularly related to environmental (e.g., SDGs 13, 14, and 15) and social (e.g., SDGs 1 and 5). From the authors' own experiences, these are five are valid expected contributions, and partnerships also materially enhance the following two goals:

*SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all*

*SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development*

## **Future trends**

It is expected that regional tourism partnerships will continue to grow and be more diverse in the decades ahead.

### ***Lesser individual resources: Powering up through collaboration***

2020-2022 has been a period for downsizing in tourism and within tourism organisations. It is likely that this situation will persist for more years and that the benefits of partnering will be even greater in the time leading up to 2030. Five future trends are anticipated with regional tourism partnerships.

### ***Technological advances: Gluing future regional tourism partnerships***

An increasing emphasis on e-marketing was one of the earlier mentioned recent trends. Regional tourism partners will increasingly value the benefits of sharing new technological advances including extended reality (augmented and virtual reality), artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), and other applications.

### ***Sustainability surge: Getting closer to 2030***

The pressure on tourism organisations to positively contribute to the achievement of the SDGs will intensify in the next seven to eight years.

### ***Climate change: Global warming knowing no boundaries***

The Glasgow Declaration on climate change action in tourism has committed all stakeholders to the following:

*“We declare our shared commitment to unite all stakeholders in transforming tourism to deliver effective climate action. We support the global commitment to halve emissions by 2030 and reach Net Zero as soon as possible before 2050. We will consistently align our actions with the latest scientific recommendations, so as to ensure our approach remains consistent with a rise of no more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels by 2100” (One Planet Network, 2022).*

Climate change actions provide a platform for future tourism partnerships as climate knows no boundaries and must be addressed regionally and globally.

### ***Creativity emphasis: Openly innovating and co-creating***

There can be little doubt that tourism will be quite different in the future and destinations will continuously have to innovate and find new ways to capitalise on opportunities and address issues and challenges. Rather than operating as closed shops, regional tourism partnerships will increasingly have to embrace open innovation (Chesbrough, 2003) and engage in co-creation with all stakeholders. Tourists and community residents need to be involved in these processes, as do tourism industry businesses.

### ***Changes ahead: Embracing organisational structure changes***

Tourism organisations, especially destination management organisations (DMOs),

will have to change in the future as a result of new realities in the marketplace and society (Reinhold, Beritelli, & Grünig, 2019). These authors (p. 1135) state that “the need and legitimacy of destination management organisations (DMOs) are increasingly questioned”.

### **Contributions and future research priorities**

Although the research studies and other scholarship efforts on regional tourism partnerships are on the increase, this is still a neglected part of the literature. This chapter has identified recent and expected future trends in regional tourism partnerships, which constitutes an important literature contribution now. Suggestions for future research priorities are also provided in the following paragraphs.

Partnering in tourism is still without solid theoretical foundations. There are such frameworks available for business in general including the concept of collaborative advantage that is attributed to Kanter (1994). She proposed the ‘8 Is that make successful we’s’ and they were individual excellence, importance, interdependence, investment, information, integration, institutionalisation, and integrity.

There is a need to develop a partnering readiness scale that specifically addresses regional tourism partnerships. Outside of tourism, there are several long-standing scales for such measurement including Dent’s (1999) concept of “partnering intelligence” and measuring an individual’s “partnering quotient”. MIT’s (partnership) *Readiness Checklist* is a tool to measure an organisation’s readiness to enter into partnerships (Massachusetts Institute of Technology. (2022).

Success stories in regional tourism partnerships are well recognised and covered; however, failures are not given the same attention. For example, Ghanem, Elshaer, & Saad (2022) document the failure of a public-private destination management system (DMS) project in Egypt after the public sector agency decided to withdraw from the collaborative project.

Thraenhart (2022) has made a noble effort to catalogue and describe many of the regional tourism partnerships on a worldwide basis. However, it is acknowledged that this inventory is incomplete and more future work is needed to provide a comprehensive listing and categorisation of such partnerships.

### **Conclusion**

Regional tourism partnerships, if effectively implemented, are multiple win propositions. They are a global phenomenon of which the benefits are universally recognised. Despite the many catalysts and reasons for creating regional tourism partnerships, there are also significant barriers and challenges in forming and implementing such collaborations.

The nature and scope of regional tourism partnerships will continually change in the future. There is a need in the years to come for these partnerships to become a more mainstream topic of tourism research.

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