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Navigating the future: the roles played by DMOs and the challenges they face

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This paper focuses on the central role played by destination management organizations (DMOs) in shaping tourism development within a region. These organisations assume a range of responsibilities, including planning and management, and are expected to take a leading role in fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders in tourist destinations (Morrison & Maxim, 2022).

DMOs are confronted with a variety of situations to which they must be prepared to respond, ranging from navigating uncertainty and advocating for sustainability, to developing a skilled workforce and building resilience against future crises (Luu, 2022; Yeoman et al., 2022). According to Jørgensen, (2017), DMOs are expected to show flexibility, adjusting their structure and roles to adapt to the specific circumstances and challenges faced by a destination. Such flexibility is increasingly needed given the current economic climate and evolving environments.

The paper examines the current functions fulfilled by DMOs and challenges they face, aiming to determine how these have evolved (if so) when compared to the pre-pandemic environment. The paper responds to calls for more in-depth studies into DMOs and their transformative role in tourism destinations (Beritelli et al., 2015), particularly in a post-pandemic landscape.

Using a critical perspective and a mixed-method approach, including semi-structured interviews with DMO representatives and an online survey applied to key tourism stakeholders, this study sheds some light into the developing roles played by DMOs. Preliminary findings highlight the complex challenges encountered by DMOs, including recurring issues such as resource constraints and insufficient collaboration, alongside emerging challenges like digitalization. The paper contributes to advancing the knowledge in the field, offering potential assistance to destination managers and other tourism stakeholders in better understanding and preparing for the challenges they face in their efforts to better manage tourism.

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