



Cultural Tourism Management: Emerging Perspectives from Local Development and Knowledge Sharing

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Abstract

Cultural tourism in rural areas is characterized by the provision of tourism products and services by local communities, grounded in their knowledge, traditions, heritage, and understanding of the territory. Proper management contributes to social and economic cohesion by protecting heritage and strengthening the community's identity. This research article analyzes the conditions of cultural tourism in relation to local development and knowledge exchange, using local actors from two provinces in the Department of Boyacá, Colombia, as a post-pandemic case study. The study follows a qualitative methodology and employs a constructivist grounded theory approach to code and prioritize categories that reflect the perceptions and experiences of the actors and institutions involved in the object of study. The results reveal territorial tensions over the equitable use of common goods between companies and local actors. Within the framework of local development, consensus is grounded in the construction of shared visions of tourism. It is articulated with the management of resilient and sustainable business models for value generation, which emerge as central categories. A cross-cutting finding is the articulation between local actors and institutions in spaces for discussion and collective construction, according to the priorities and realities of the local actors who participate in cultural tourism. This integration strengthens the social capital present in the territories through dialogue, exchange, and the transmission of knowledge.

Keywords

Knowledge sharing; Territoriality; Local development; Value creation; Cultural tourism.

Registration

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Gestión del turismo cultural: perspectivas emergentes desde el desarrollo local y el intercambio de conocimiento

Resumen

El turismo cultural en áreas rurales se caracteriza por la prestación de productos y servicios turísticos por parte de las comunidades locales, sustentados en sus conocimientos, tradiciones, patrimonio y comprensión del territorio. Una gestión adecuada contribuye a la cohesión social y económica mediante la protección del patrimonio y el fortalecimiento de la identidad comunitaria. Este artículo de investigación analiza las condiciones del turismo cultural en relación con el desarrollo local y el intercambio de conocimientos, tomando como estudio de caso pospandemia a actores locales de dos provincias del departamento de Boyacá, Colombia. El estudio sigue una metodología cualitativa y emplea un enfoque de teoría fundamentada constructivista para codificar y priorizar categorías que reflejan las percepciones y experiencias de los actores e instituciones involucrados en el objeto de estudio. Los resultados revelan tensiones territoriales en torno al uso equitativo de los bienes comunes entre empresas y actores locales. En el marco del desarrollo local, el consenso se fundamenta en la construcción de visiones compartidas del turismo y se articula con la gestión de modelos empresariales resilientes y sostenibles para la generación de valor, los cuales emergen como categorías centrales. Un hallazgo transversal es la articulación entre actores locales e instituciones en espacios de diálogo y construcción colectiva, de acuerdo con las prioridades y realidades de los actores locales que participan en el turismo cultural. Esta integración fortalece el capital social presente en los territorios mediante el diálogo, el intercambio y la transmisión de conocimientos.

Palabras clave

Intercambio de conocimientos; territorialidad; desarrollo local; creación de valor; turismo cultural.

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1. Introduction

The value attributed to territories is shaped by actors' sense of belonging and by their responsible use and management of tangible and intangible heritage in economic activities. Unlike several other Latin American countries, Colombia has recorded significant tourism growth since the pandemic. According to indicators from the United Nations World Tourism Organization, foreign tourist arrivals in Colombia increased by 7.72% in 2022, compared with 5.8% in the Americas, using 2019 as the baseline ([UNWTO, 2023](#)).

In the Department of Boyacá, according to the National Administrative Department of Statistics - DANE- and departmental statistics, tourism's contribution to departmental GDP remained at an average of 18% in 2023, despite the restrictions imposed between 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic. In 2022, visitor flows were mainly domestic, while the presence of foreign tourists increased by 24% compared with 2019. In that year, 47% of foreign tourists accessed cultural tourism products and services ([Mincomercio, 2025](#); [SITUR, 2022](#)).

In Colombia, cultural tourism is characterized by the recognition and valuation of cultural heritage and biodiversity in territories other than tourists' places of origin. Since 2021, the strengthening of the sector has been supported by sustainable tourism and cultural tourism policies. These policies initially focused on economic reactivation, labor formalization, the use, protection, and safeguarding of territorial heritage, and the integration of tourism offerings with attributes that guarantee the tourist experience. In recent years, following recommendations from the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), strategies have been oriented toward promoting innovation, entrepreneurship, business productivity, and the integration of the local economy ([BID, 2020](#); [OECD, 2022](#)).

The implementation of these policies at regional and local levels is shaped by the participation and management of State institutions, academia, the business sector, and civil society organizations. However, efforts to comply with institutional requirements often result in limited and weakly relevant contributions, largely because cultural and tourism agents are not sufficiently represented in spaces of collective construction. As a result, genuine knowledge exchange is constrained, even though destination management requires the integration of local dynamics and the valuation of cultural heritage.

This article examines how articulation between local and institutional actors can promote cultural tourism from the perspectives of local development and knowledge exchange. The study involved actors who participate in cultural tourism in the Alto Ricaurte subprovince and in municipalities of the Tenza Valley region in the Department of Boyacá, Colombia. To address this research focus, it was necessary to identify the interests, contexts, and trajectories of tourism service providers in the post-COVID period, as well as the ways in which the actors relate to one another.

Specifically, the Alto Ricaurte subprovince (Boyacá) comprises six municipalities and has a population of 40,068 inhabitants ([DANE, 2025](#)). Its main economic activities are agriculture, tourism (cultural, nature-based, and archaeological), handicrafts, and trade. The Tenza Valley region comprises 17 municipalities in the departments of Boyacá and Cundinamarca; it has an approximate population of 60,000 inhabitants, and its economy is based on agriculture and mining ([Bastidas, 2015](#)). The region is characterized by its gastronomy, cultural richness, and ethnocultural documentation ([Huertas Cardozo, 2016](#)).

The aim of this article is to understand, on the basis of the perceptions and experiences of local actors and institutions, the elements that drive cultural tourism through local development and knowledge exchange. It also seeks to identify the challenges and opportunities of tourism as an economic and social alternative for heritage conservation and the strengthening of local communities from a local perspective.

The article begins with a review of the conceptual and theoretical references that support the categories of cultural tourism, local development, and knowledge exchange. It then describes the qualitative

methodological process, based on the constructivist grounded theory approach proposed by [Charmaz \(2006\)](#), in order to understand the relationship among cultural tourism, local development, and knowledge exchange among actors.

The results account for the relationships between territorial development and tourism management, derived from business capacities that improve the tourism offer through value addition. The analysis emphasizes the impact of cultural tourism in the post-COVID period, the importance of the dialogue among knowledge systems, the synergies between local and institutional actors, and the need for sustainable alternatives in the tourism sector that do not compromise common goods. It also highlights inequities in the distribution of benefits and the relevance of including local actors in the design and implementation of tourism plans.

2. Literature Review

Cultural Tourism and Heritage

The link between heritage and tourism is established through tourists' motivation to recognize and value the tangible and intangible assets of destinations through the "logic of spectacle and consumption" ([Prats, 1998, p. 126](#)). Within this logic, cultural heritage loses value when it is exhibited and commodified for political and economic purposes that serve the interests of mass consumption, thereby obscuring the meanings, knowledge, traditions, and cultural relations that connect it to territories ([UNESCO, 2003](#)). [Csurgó and Smith \(2022\)](#) emphasize that, beyond recognized and safeguarded heritage, social cohesion and cultural identity form part of the value creation of tourism products and services.

These positions tend to classify cultural tourism according to its commercial value, without examining the cultural and social elements that heritage entails or the extent to which, from disciplines concerned with heritage safeguarding, tourism may be perceived as a threat. In response to these concerns, the UNWTO, at the Third [UNWTO/UNESCO World Conference \(2018\)](#), adjusted the definition of cultural tourism as the set of distinctive material, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional characteristics of a society, including arts and architecture, historical and cultural heritage, culinary heritage, literature, music, creative industries, and living cultures with their lifestyles, value systems, beliefs, and traditions. This expanded concept requires the inclusion of actors from the arts and humanities, who have often been insufficiently recognized but have become increasingly relevant in tourism.

This assessment does not seek to devalue tourism, despite the environmental and social impacts associated with its massification as an economic activity in some territories. Rather, it seeks to identify the elements that make it possible to develop a sustainable tourism offer, promote the responsible use of heritage, and value heritage as a living component of the cultural and social legacy of territories. As [Hernández \(2017\)](#) and [Bertoncello \(2002\)](#) suggest, this implies strengthening the tourist experience from the moment of travel to the destination as a social practice, in which relationships among tourism providers, local actors, and institutions converge, together with the destination's capacity, accessibility, and infrastructure.

In relation to COVID-19, [Richards \(2021\)](#) supports these claims through three elements: the actor-structure relationship that guides competencies, materials, and meanings; social practices as forms of interaction and as part of context; and tourists' motivations. Additional studies examine the effects of COVID-19 on tourism enterprises, tourists' preferences and purchase intentions, and emerging trends in tourism research ([Pan, Li, Fu, Liu, and Guo, 2025](#)). They also highlight the need to plan and manage risk in response to events beyond organizational control ([Vianchá-Sánchez, Rojas-Pinilla, and Barrera-Rojas, 2021](#)), as well as resilience as a mechanism for tourism sustainability and adaptation ([Moghavvemi and Hassani, 2024](#); [Sann, Lai, and Liaw, 2024](#)). Complementary topics include rural tourism, digital literacy ([Sandoval-Bravo, 2021](#)), and marketing strategies for reactivating tourism activity in the territories ([Otero, Vásquez, Gordillo, Padilla, and Hernández, 2023](#)).

In the face of these new realities, cultural tourism requires the strengthening of companies and social enterprises that recognize, internalize, and value the use and conservation of heritage, grounded in respect for the cultural identity of the territories. Understood as a system, cultural tourism does not depend solely on the supply of tourism products based on cultural and natural heritage. It also requires analyzing the destination's installed capacity and its relationship with the dynamics of local actors, which, in turn, determine how heritage enriches situated knowledge, traditions, and culture; in other words, its social value according to the priority or importance assigned to it in the territories. In some cases, the definition of the tourism offer may remain unclear, depending on the destination's level of maturity.

Social Capital and Cultural Tourism: Collaborative Interactions for the Sustainability of the Sector

The use of cultural heritage raises debates about legitimation, protection, and access, especially when local actors are unaware of its value or are unable to use it for their own benefit, as [Prats \(2003\)](#) suggests. Capitalization is determined by use value, maintenance costs, and the degree to which communities can benefit from the resources available in their territory. From the perspective of territoriality, the use of common goods implies that actors, through their activities, participate in how these goods are used, managed, and maintained according to their interests.

Following [Bourdieu \(2011\)](#) and [Valle \(2012\)](#), actors' participation is established through social capital, understood as the set of relationships that enable the exchange of resources—social resources, knowledge, efforts, and others—according to actors' capacities. In cultural tourism, social capital enables the creation of knowledge and cooperation networks in the territories. From the perspective of network theory, as analyzed by [Lin \(2005\)](#), it concerns how resources from others are obtained and mobilized. Related studies link social capital to the creation, maintenance, and sustainability of relationships grounded in heritage protection, which promote trust, governance, cooperation, and resilience through agreements, dialogue, and collective learning ([Rodrigues, Mendes, Brandão, Esteves, and Liberato, 2024](#)).

In the territories, this social capital is grounded in identity and in the recognition that internal and external actors give to cultural heritage, as well as in the ways in which they connect it to tourism activity. Its use as a comparative advantage in competitiveness depends on adapting the offer to tourists' interests as consumers while also maintaining and safeguarding local knowledge and traditions as part of the community's culture. From the perspective of local development, network articulation, social inclusion, and capacity building—as outcomes of endogenous development—are key to responding equitably to environmental demands, ensuring the sustainability of tourist destinations, and clarifying how local actors and companies interact within governance spaces.

The studies by [González Marín and Ricaurte Villa \(2021\)](#) and [Quader, Hossain, and Hassan \(2024\)](#) analyze experiences that help explain the relationship between tourism and local development in the post-pandemic period, as well as the challenges involved in the relationships among actors who manage tourism in the territories. [Williamson \(2005\)](#) analysis of regions as Intercultural Learning Territories (ILTs) offers a way to examine these interactions, since actors' experiences and lessons learned can generate synergies in shared spaces. However, institutional local development initiatives sometimes fail to prioritize the needs of actors linked to cultural tourism, which generates distrust regarding the use of such initiatives for private benefit, as [Prats \(2003\)](#) and [Dueñas-Quintero \(2023\)](#) point out.

On this basis, the presence of social capital in tourism territories can be understood as the capacity of actors to maintain cohesion through dialogue, trust building, and the mobilization of capacities and resources for the use and maintenance of heritage as added value in cultural tourism.

Exchange in the Social Appropriation of Knowledge

The interaction between scientific and traditional knowledge requires an understanding of community needs—in this case, the needs of tourism communities—and the development of solutions through

research, training, consulting, and advisory processes in which local actors participate as active subjects ([Quader, Hossain, and Hassan, 2024](#)). The result is the social appropriation of knowledge, which, from the standpoint of relevance, facilitates understanding of the context of local actors, dialogue among knowledge systems, and the co-construction of solutions through learning and collective work.

However, limitations persist in the creation, transfer, and exchange of knowledge. In his discussion of the decolonization of knowledge, [De Sousa Santos \(2019\)](#) points to distrust, quality, and the meaning of intervention processes, which, in the case of academic institutions, operate as mediations for alternative solutions in the communities involved. Research by [Sann, Lai, and Liaw \(2024\)](#) and [Alvarado-Vanegas, Vanneste, Espinoza-Figueroa, Farfán-Pacheco, and Rodríguez-Girón \(2025\)](#) suggests that the effectiveness of such actions depends on the documentation of experiences, the use of methodologies oriented toward social innovation, dialogue among knowledge systems, heritage valorization, and the dissemination of knowledge through media accessible to the actors.

These interactions facilitate the interpretation of the realities of actors engaged in cultural tourism and the construction of solutions based on the experience, knowledge, and know-how of those involved. In line with sectoral trends and the World Tourism Organization ([UNWTO, 2012](#)), the challenge lies in ensuring sustainability by responsibly managing cultural heritage in tourism activities, in collaboration with local actors, as an alternative for safeguarding cultural heritage and improving the social, environmental, and economic conditions of actors in tourism territories.

3. Methodology

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach to identify the conditions of cultural tourism in relation to local development and knowledge exchange through actor articulation ([Hernández-Sampieri and Mendoza Torres, 2018](#)). It is grounded in the interpretive paradigm, which "postulates a reality dependent on the meanings that people attribute to it. In this way, we are talking about a social reality constructed through these meanings" ([Krause, 1995, p. 7](#)).

Constructivist grounded theory was used as the method for analyzing information. This approach maintains an open attitude toward factors and behaviors that emerge during the study and responds to the need to "ground" the observed phenomena. Accordingly, constructivist grounded theory holds that knowledge arises from the treatment of practical problems and is socially constructed ([Charmaz, 2006](#); [Morse, Bowers, Charmaz, Clarke, Corbin, Porr, and Stern, 2021](#)).

The cultural unit of analysis was located in the provinces of Alto Ricaurte and Valle de Tenza in the Department of Boyacá, Colombia. The selection of actors was based on their recognition in the territory as tourism providers, representatives of associations, and/or institutions linked to programs, projects, and initiatives, mainly in rural areas, as well as on the inclusion of cultural heritage in their products.

Participant data were provided by the Local Development Agencies ADEL DINOSAURIOS and GAL VALLETENZANO, entities that work in these territories in relation to the social economy. Interviewees were selected through the theoretical sampling method proposed by [Glaser and Strauss \(1967\)](#). Selection depended on contacts within the tourism offer who, at the time, were actively providing services, as well as on institutions working in the sector. The number of interviews was determined by theoretical saturation, and the process was halted when interviewees reiterated perceptions, meanings, and positions associated with the initial categories. The final sample comprised 23 stakeholders: eight public or private institutions, two organized social groups, and 13 rural tourism initiatives in the two provinces. To ensure confidentiality, agreements were discussed and mutually accepted by the parties.

Semi-structured interviews, organized into five categories and fourteen subcategories ([Table 1](#)), were conducted in August and September 2021. The recordings were transcribed for analysis, as recommended

by [Creswell \(2013\)](#), and the interviews were conducted at the sites where each actor carries out their activities. Although grounded theory recommends avoiding biases derived from researchers' preconceived categories, references from [Strauss and Corbin \(1990\)](#) were used to interpret the emerging categories of tourism activity in relation to local development and knowledge exchange.

In tourism, these categories arise from sociocultural practices grounded in tradition and history as part of identity ([Jociles Rubio, 2018](#); [Ulloa et al., 2004](#)) and involve the recognition and exchange of knowledge in tourism activity ([Ghiso, 2000](#)). For this research, the role of institutions consists in recognizing their capacity to energize policies and programs through community participation. This interaction helps clarify how these actors engage with and energize tourism territories as a binding element of local development.

Table 1.

Categories and subcategories of the data collection instrument

Main categories	Subcategories
Sociocultural practices	Cultural practices
	Recognition of knowledge
	Dialogue of knowledge
Social appropriation of knowledge	Knowledge transfer and exchange
	Citizen participation
Perceptions	Culture
	Environment
	Initiatives
Institutionality	Interaction with the public sector
	Institutional relations
Problems	Social
	Economic
	Acculturation
	Loss of traditions

Note. The established categories are related to tourism as an economic activity, local development, and dialogue among knowledge systems. **Source:** Authors' elaboration.

Content analysis and triangulation were based on the construction of meaning from the text (interviews), the pretext (theoretical frameworks and constructs relevant to the researcher), and the context (the research environment). The data were subjected to open coding using NVIVO software; codes were assigned to specific fragments of textual material to capture ideas and themes, which were then organized into categories and dimensions. Axial coding was used to establish relationships and analyze co-occurrences among the codes and emerging categories, grouping them by dimensions, categories, and codes ([Charmaz, 2006](#)). In total, 188 codes were identified and, through triangulation, organized into four dimensions of analysis, 16 categories, and 57 codes ([Table 2](#)).

Based on this coding process, selective coding was conducted using the central dimensions that explain situations, conditions, and meanings in cultural tourism, dialogue among knowledge systems, and their implications in the post-COVID period. These dimensions were organized as follows: development, COVID effects, local knowledge systems, and tourism. The relationships identified were represented through semantic networks and organized according to their nature and scope. The interpretation of these relationships among dimensions and categories made it possible to identify strategic elements for strengthening tourism activity in these territories.

Table 2

Dimensions and Categories of Analysis

Dimensions	Categories	Rows	Coding
Development		64	560
	Change	43	148
	Sustainable tourism development	44	146
	Sustainable Tourism Development	26	54
COVID Effects		10	26
	Low-intensity tourism	3	4
	Sustainable alternatives	7	7
	Sustainable Alternatives	53	215
Local knowledge systems		4	32
	Knowledge management practices	11	31
	Local stakeholders	4	18
	Local Stakeholders	13	38
	System	34	142
Tourism		53	612
	Tourism companies	6	25
	Tourist destinations	16	46
	Tourism economy	9	14
	Tourism literature	13	19
	Tourism sector	8	10
	Tourism Sector	20	48

Note. The dimensions and categories resulted from the process of open coding and triangulation.

Source: NVIVO coding results.

3. Main Findings

3.1. Cultural Tourism and Local Development: Local Dynamics in the Post-Pandemic Period

Tourism is established in the territories through traditional and complementary activities that incorporate sustainable practices aimed at reducing economic and environmental impacts. In the territories under study, private initiatives promote tourism activities, while government programs seek to strengthen the sector under different conditions of tourism development. Despite these differences, post-pandemic challenges in destination management focus on organizations' capacity to position themselves through products and services that add value to the tourist experience.

As a result of the coding process, the categories explain the recognition of natural and cultural heritage and its relationship with territories as destinations. They also recognize the role of institutions in strengthening tourism as part of social and economic development, despite the implications of disproportionate growth in territories that lack sufficient tourist-service capacity and where the consequences for local dynamics have not been adequately measured. [Table 3](#) presents the factors and elements associated with tourism dynamics and the impacts of the pandemic, highlighting restrictions and lessons learned for improving stakeholder relationships.

Table 3.

Factors and elements resulting from the initial coding to semi-structured inter-views

Factors	Elements
Tourist destinations	Recognition of natural and cultural heritage as potential Emerging tourism activities: rural tourism, community tourism, and adventure tourism
Fair tourism	Displacement of the local community due to the purchase of land Lagging position of small enterprises compared with external companies
Tourism businesses	Formalization Entrepreneurship Diversification in economic activity as a result of the pandemic
Relationship between actors	Relevance of knowledge Technical support Technical Support Planning processes and institutional support

Note. This table presents the factors and elements that demonstrate the importance of destination development in relation to the role of the actors involved in tourism.

Source: Authors' elaboration based on primary information from the study areas.

The interviewees emphasized the closing of certain gaps in tourism despite the COVID-19 pandemic. These gaps can be grouped into two factors: the preservation of cultural and natural heritage as part of fair tourism, and the strengthening of tourism service providers' capacities. The first involves recovering knowledge and traditions in order to promote fair tourism. The second includes formalization, the expansion of products and services as part of diversification, specialized advisory services, and the improvement of internal processes as part of organizational growth in the sector:

"I am only now beginning to manage inbound tourism, because the Tenza Valley is biodiverse [...] and has impressive tourism potential. However, it is not potential for people from the region; it is potential for foreigners" (Tourism Network – Tenza Valley).

"Well, let's say that, through work experience, I have managed to articulate myself and become involved and, in a certain way, remain close to the processes. So people already more or less know the work we have been doing [...] For us, tourism is not only an economic activity; it also has a strong focus on heritage conservation" (Travel Agent – Sáchica).

"When I started working with ADEL Dinosaurios, I realized something wonderful, namely that there is impressive potential not only in Gachantivá but also in the entire province" (Hotel - Gachantivá). This behavior is linked to the creation of new enterprises by local people who returned to these territories, the incorporation of new services into existing companies, and the increased supply of products in destinations that had low tourist presence before the pandemic:

"That is what I am thankful to the pandemic for [...] thanks to the pandemic, young people returned and invested in their own municipality [...]. In Guateque, you used to find only two fast-food stalls; now you find food, traditional products. People from the countryside are already selling vegetables from their home gardens. Apart from that, more things are beginning to appear throughout the municipality" (Municipal Councilor – Guateque).

The interviewed actors recognize both the institutional effort and the initially negative impact of the pandemic; currently, however, the increase in the consumption of tourism products and services is significant. In Boyacá, the municipality of Villa de Leyva, which belongs to the Alto Ricaurte subprovince, is the international benchmark destination and is therefore used to analyze the sector's behavior. By 2023, transformations in these destinations were reflected in population growth. Although official State figures are unavailable, local

authorities state that Villa de Leyva grew from 17,000 to 25,000 inhabitants, as accommodation facilities became permanent residences for a floating population ([Jiménez, 2023](#)).

This behavior is accompanied by local concern regarding the purchase of land at below-market prices, which displaces residents from their places of origin. During the pandemic, the increase in second homes limited the availability of basic services in the territories, increased waste, heightened insecurity, and, overall, reduced the quality of life of local residents in order to satisfy the demands of this economic activity: *"Here, on a weekend, the town collapses: there is nowhere to move, nowhere to park, gasoline runs out, there is no bread in the bakery, commerce shuts down [...], and the water goes out for five or even seven days, sometimes in the middle of the polvoreros festivities"* (Hotel Manager – Guateque).

This behavior is recurrent in destinations with low carrying capacity and high tourist demand; it exceeds both the conditions of the territory and the needs of local communities. In Villa de Leyva, water shortages constitute a gap in tourism activity because, according to reports from ESVILLA ESP, the periods of the year with the lowest water availability coincide with the high seasons for tourism products and services. [Hernández Palacios \(2021\)](#) and [Fonseca Vanegas \(2024\)](#) explain this problem as the result of limited State intervention and inadequate infrastructure for water access and supply.

Given these perceptions, fair tourism promotes responsible resource use for sustainability. Actors who are aware of these changes encourage experiences that invite tourists to adopt sustainable practices in the destinations and to practice self-care. In this regard, fair tourism involves local enterprises and communities as beneficiaries of economic and social outcomes.

Based on axial coding, the factors and elements that contribute to this value addition were identified from two perspectives: one focused on the organizational sphere and the other grounded in the context in which tourism activity takes place. The integration of the value chain into flexible and resilient business models forms part of the tourism sector's capacity for adaptation and recovery, as [Farsari \(2023\)](#) suggests in her analysis of tourism sustainability, governance, and research complexity. This approach suggests the need to limit the use of natural and cultural heritage and to avoid the displacement of local communities; in other words, it should respond to the goals established in the Sustainable Development Goals.

From this perspective, the microenterprises and enterprises interviewed were in the process of consolidating their offerings before the pandemic. During COVID-19, some diversified their offerings by using available infrastructure for new activities. In this regard, tourism management involves designing and implementing value-adding strategies. In the territories, enterprises receive institutional support for promotion, formalization, and capacity strengthening. However, concerns remain about their sustainability because of the investment capacity required to consolidate destinations and respond to tourists' preferences, particularly those who recognize the importance of traditional knowledge and its impact on improving community quality of life ([Dueñas Quintero, Vianchá Sánchez, Fraile Benítez, Castillo-Reina, and Ayala Suárez, 2021, p. 88](#)).

In the provinces, work networks partially contribute to strengthening the sector through organizational learning and the adoption of good practices in service provision. Labor informality, costs associated with seasonal income, and the presence of digital platforms that facilitate the supply of products and services—some of which do not comply with national formalization requirements—hinder consolidation. These limitations, together with actors' disengagement caused by the lack of clear institutional guidance on regulatory compliance, have increased the involvement of family members in these organizations, thereby reinforcing informality and low service quality.¹

In Colombia, the closing of these gaps has been addressed by the National Cultural Tourism Policy -2021-, which is oriented toward strengthening and specializing the tourism offer and cultural assets, developing sustainability initiatives, and promoting governance. In addition, the National Culture Plan 2024–2038,

¹ In Colombia, all tourism providers must be registered with the National Tourism Registry, in addition to having the necessary business documentation.

"Culture for the Care of the Diversity of Life, Territory, and Peace," is oriented toward diversity and intercultural dialogue, memory and creation, and governance and cultural sustainability, together with tourism policy.

As [Jaramillo-González, Velásquez-Puerta, Bustamante-Lozano, and Yáñez-Canal \(2024\)](#) note in their analysis of cultural policies in Colombia, the promotion of emerging economies, such as the creative industries, has increased the visibility of actors in the sector and expanded practices that integrate heritage into the creation of new products for other types of audiences. This inter- and transdisciplinary articulation promotes the development of tourist destinations by shaping interactions and the use of resources within the territories. Territoriality, in this context, refers to networked interaction dynamics shaped by actors' contexts and everyday lives.

Cultural Tourism and Knowledge Transfer

From the perspective of local development, collaboration networks in tourism are based on interests that benefit their members, on their capacities for the conservation, safeguarding, and responsible use of heritage, and on solutions and opportunities for market positioning. The presence of grassroots organizations in the territories analyzed has helped safeguard knowledge and traditions in isolated ways, either through their own initiative or through institutional support, as added value for their tourism offer.

As a mechanism for the appropriation of knowledge, dialogue among knowledge systems gives meaning to identity, enables generational renewal, and fosters social cohesion. It also involves elements of communication and language, community recognition, and connection to the new knowledge economy. In this respect, cultural heritage contributes to the construction and strengthening of a tourist destination's identity and denotes distinctive elements and meanings that tourists recognize through experiences of integration with other tourism facilities and consumers.

Part of this social construction is the possibility of documenting such knowledge as a strategy for safeguarding cultural heritage. However, disinterest and lack of awareness persist; therefore, due to situations beyond the control of the institutional framework, this exchange does not occur permanently in the territories:

"You have to find those people and make use of the knowledge they have. For example, we also have Doña Isabel, and I know she knows a lot about the municipality's history. We must look for those people who can tell us those stories and document them [...] so that they allow us to disseminate them, because if you have the knowledge but do not authorize me to disseminate it, I am not going to start talking [...]. You must know how to manage it so that I can make it known" (Professional, Tourist Information Point – Guatemala).

The documentation of knowledge has implications that depend on the users of this ancestral and traditional knowledge. On the one hand, knowledge holders exercise caution regarding its use and exploitation; on the other hand, guarantees are needed so that transfer results in appropriation by the actors who will use it as part of the tourism offer.

Although the use, exploitation, and transfer of this knowledge are decisive, articulation between local actors and institutions serves different purposes. Representatives of the interviewed institutions describe the implementation of projects and programs whose results are measured primarily through coverage indicators. When asked about the impact of these actions in the territories, their answers are limited: they support the inclusion of specialized training based on local needs and the participation of local actors as active subjects in project development. In addition to facilitating contact with and access to communities, such participation brings actors' experience into actions oriented toward achieving expected results.

3.2. Meanings of Tourism in the Territory: Correlation of Variables

The co-occurrence analysis, derived from selective coding, identifies relationships and frequencies among the codes in order to determine the elements that can promote cultural tourism in accordance with local development and dialogue among knowledge systems in the post-COVID period.

The emerging dimensions and categories capture the direct effects of the pandemic on tourism enterprises, companies, and organizations, including limitations on value addition within their offerings. These include the reorientation of business models, the design of tourist routes, and the articulation of local actors. The importance of this articulation as social capital is evident in alliances that manage resources among tourism service providers and institutions, where advice and/or technical support are commonly provided ([Table 4](#)).

Table 4.

Co-occurrence matrix interviews local actors

	Tourism	Business model	Innovative tourism enterprise	Value	Process	Local communities	Sustainable alternatives	Development	Local development	Change
Tourism sector	51	7	4	8	4	5	6	18	4	5
Tourism businesses	49	1	5	1	1	3	2	5	4	0
Social tourism entrepreneurship	20	31	33	29	12	13	10	36	10	13
Business model	95	0	65	64	39	28	42	75	18	19
Innovative tourism enterprise	31	65	0	86	43	37	33	64	15	26
Social mission	6	15	21	22	13	9	10	14	1	7
Social issues	31	40	54	32	15	21	20	44	12	11
Social problems	3	15	25	21	14	6	10	17	0	11
Social innovation processes	1	12	30	26	15	5	6	17	1	6
Value	60	64	86	0	162	33	39	83	13	33
Process	33	39	43	162	0	25	21	54	9	21
Fair tourism	34	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	3	1
System	57	32	16	30	13	15	12	37	10	15
Local communities	60	28	37	33	25	0	26	77	29	21
Sustainable alternatives	65	42	33	39	21	26	0	87	14	18
Sustainable tourism	8	3	2	3	1	4	17	13	2	0
Sustainable development	6	7	4	7	4	2	23	21	1	3
Sustainable tourism development	14	3	2	3	1	8	23	57	4	0
Local development	36	18	15	13	9	29	14	149	0	11
Change	42	19	26	33	21	21	18	146	11	0
Social change	1	6	14	8	6	5	3	31	1	31

Note. The data presented correspond to the co-occurrence analysis of interview coding. The intensity of co-occurrence is visualized through color intensity: blue indicates a stronger relationship between categories and codes, whereas red indicates a lower contribution. **Source:** Authors' elaboration based on NVIVO coding results.

Although the co-occurrence analysis does not show a significant relationship with cultural tourism, it can be inferred that the consolidation of the activity depends on alignment among the tourism offer, regulations, and tourist preferences, since tourists are concerned about additional operating costs. In this regard, local, regional, and national institutions are expected to align their programs and projects with grassroots organizations, microenterprises, and tourism businesses.

The purpose is to improve service quality and strengthen business capacity. However, several gaps limit collaboration: divergent interests among institutions and communities; tourism service providers offering

insufficiently differentiated, innovative, and sustainable products; the loss of cultural identity among new residents; mistrust; individualism; and factors that motivate the shift toward local development (Table 4). Despite the recovery of tourism activity, interviewees perceive that institutional work continues to position tourism as the main economic activity. For actors linked to tourism, concerns center on destination carrying capacity and its impact on residents' quality of life, with occupancy levels rarely exceeding 60% per year. In these territories, tourism is a complementary activity and mainly involves rural and transport actors, occasionally including tour guides. Thus, tourism's contribution to development depends on the integration of local actors and the reduction of negative impacts on local natural resources.²

Sociocultural tensions arise from population growth in localities with small permanent populations and large floating populations. These tensions limit access to basic resources and services, such as water, sanitation, and food. The pandemic exacerbated this phenomenon by transforming rest homes or rural accommodations into permanent residences, especially as a result of virtual work lifestyles:

"Yes, there are quite a few people [...] who have their farms, but they work in Bogotá, Tunja, or on the coast [...] They work locked up on their farms and come to town to do their weekend shopping, and then goodbye: they disconnect from congestion in the cities [...] When you enter Guateque, you will see that they are building too much for the same reason, thanks to the pandemic. Guateque had not grown so much, and now there are more than six housing projects, and people are buying" (Municipal Council – Guateque).

The social impact of tourism is related to the cost of living, driven by the increased value of land for local actors. The shift from agricultural production to accommodation services encourages land sales and the relocation of residents, undermining their access to livelihoods because of displacement caused by tourism companies that affect small local businesses.

4. Discussion

The behavior of local communities linked to tourism raises questions about their dependence on this activity, the impact of mass tourism on territories, and the search for alternatives for the sustainable use of common goods, such as natural resources and tangible and intangible heritage that are vulnerable to agglomeration and degradation. These alternatives require good practices mediated by articulation among local actors.

The qualitative analysis considered contextual elements related to the characterization of tourism in the provinces, the perceptions of local actors, and secondary documentation from research related to the topic of study. The coding integrated four dimensions and sixteen categories of analysis centered on the development of local communities, the impact of tourism on the safeguarding of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, livelihoods and natural resources, and the interaction and responses of actors to the implementation of policies and regulations linked to the sector.

The interactions among categories call into question the use of good practices in cultural tourism management in destinations, the implementation of policies that reduce gaps in access to common goods, and the equitable use of basic resources by residents and tourists. According to the notion of well-being suggested by [Ma, Wang, Dai, and Ou \(2021\)](#), these issues depend on the role of the actor interpreting them. The occurrence analysis shows that tourism management depends on interinstitutional actions that address these questions. If this interaction can be strengthened as social capital, then agreements must integrate resources and capacities in response to the sector's demands after the pandemic.

The central concern is how articulation among actors promotes cultural tourism under criteria of sustainability, fair tourism, and local development. When the conditions of the territories are analyzed as a system, relationships are shaped by spaces for collective work among associations, tourism companies, civil-

² According to SITUR statistics, the average occupancy rate in Colombia for 2024 is 51% ([Ministerio de Comercio, Industria y Turismo - MINCOMERCIO 2025](#)).

society reserves, municipal administrations, and other relevant actors. These spaces make it possible to conserve common goods through dialogue and knowledge exchange, while ethically recognizing diversity and respecting local ideologies, values, and cultures. These lessons have been validated in similar contexts by [Ngo and Pham \(2023\)](#) and [Rastegar and Ruhanen \(2021\)](#).

Although local communities may experience prejudices associated with the discrimination of local knowledge, as well as a lack of clarity and equity—as [Dueñas \(2023\)](#) analyzes in relation to knowledge exchange and transfer processes—the relevance of interactions and relationships in tourism requires in-depth consideration of elements that may initially appear superficial. Perhaps the relationship among actors does not consist merely in reaching agreements, but in making them tangible. In this respect, governance should create spaces that make it possible to understand local dynamics and the autonomous ways in which tourism activities are carried out, and then to design and implement strategies that adapt to these conditions and incorporate knowledge while respecting multiculturalism. As one interviewee notes, it is essential to understand what is truly needed in order to collaborate with communities, organizations, and/or businesses.

Detractors of tourism identify barriers to knowledge exchange that stem from tensions between settlers and outsiders in the territories, the ideology that promotes tourism as an economic alternative, and, to a large extent, limited understanding of the rational use and care of local resources. These implications are linked to fair tourism, which addresses strategies for territorial recovery in response to climate-related causes, the impacts of the pandemic, the crisis of globalization, mass tourism, and the deterioration of social and local well-being in destinations ([Jamal and Higham, 2021](#)). The Colombian Association of Responsible Tourism (ACOTUR) orients its actions toward the conservation of natural and cultural heritage. In its mission, it integrates local actors as decision makers in the configuration of value chains grounded in the local social fabric, with the aim of reducing negative impacts.

Fair tourism, as a linking element in the dialogue among knowledge systems, contributes to interpreting the meanings established by the community and institutions. From these experiences, the relevance of knowledge exchange and/or transfer for territorial sustainability and the empowerment of local actors is expressed in the achievement of their objectives or the resolution of their challenges, supported by local knowledge. In [Figure 1](#), the categories and codes with the greatest influence and dependence are not directly related to spaces that enable dialogue among knowledge systems; even the coding shows that knowledge transfer and appropriation are emerging aspects that have so far been only weakly recognized by local actors.

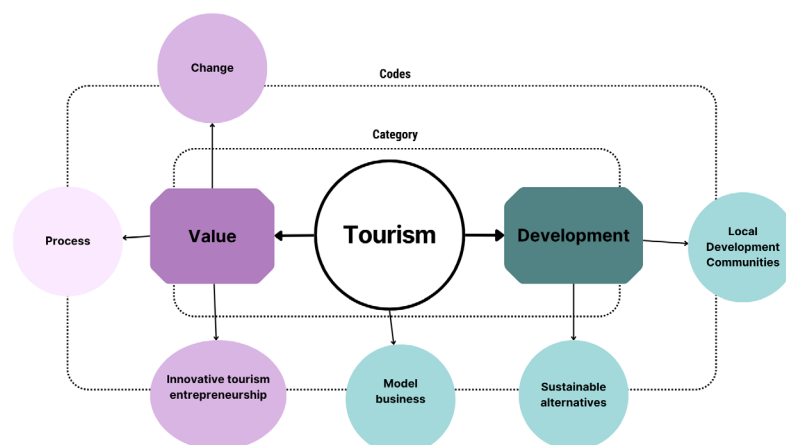


Figure 1. Categories and codes with the greatest influence and dependence between cultural tourism and development.

Note. The figure relates the categories with the highest coding according to their influence and dependence.

Source: Authors' elaboration based on the co-occurrence analysis in NVIVO.

The priorities of the interviewed actors, derived from the categories with the highest coding (Figure 1), focus on how cultural tourism contributes to the territory through business models and enterprises that specialize the tourism offer on the basis of resources, capacities, and knowledge. Value addition is linked to the sustainable use of cultural and natural heritage by leveraging tangible and intangible assets. Depending on the processes involved, mechanisms can be established to add value as part of tourism management, while social capital acts as a mediator to address needs, recognize cultural tourism in the territories, and foster dialogue and knowledge transmission between local actors and tourism organizations. In this way, local development integrates capacities and cultural identity into situated social constructions that enable change as an alternative for sustainable use and as a cross-cutting element in destination management.

The sector's challenges and opportunities are shaped by tourism activity in the territories and by trends toward local tourism with a diversified offer. This implies that cohesion among institutions and local actors participates in the solution through dialogue among knowledge systems. Actors within the National Science, Technology, and Innovation System are integrated into these processes, and their actions are carried out within the framework of the national science, technology, and innovation policy and the national policy for the social appropriation of knowledge ([DNP, 2009](#); [Minciencias, 2021](#)). This articulation is connected to cultural tourism management, which involves strengthening the capacities of local companies and enterprises through specialized support and collaborative work with local communities in inclusive business models, without affecting local livelihoods or the social value of heritage.

In this regard, the social link among actors, State institutions, academia, civil society, and sector-related organizations is central to understanding and closing gaps in tourism territories, with emphasis on regulatory compliance and capacity building to develop mutually beneficial solutions. The continuity of these processes depends on the commitment and responsibility of local actors, grounded in their autonomy, and on the use of tools and means that situate knowledge according to its applicability in the territories and, in the case of tourism, in enterprises, companies, and communities. These elements can promote local knowledge systems in the territories, as proposed by [Olivé \(2010\)](#) through the social use of knowledge and its link to interculturality, or through intercultural learning spaces, as suggested by [Williamson \(2005\)](#).

Its relevance lies in ensuring that collaboration networks enable actors in the territories to manage cultural tourism in response to post-COVID trends linked to resilience models and curatorial practices. These practices involve selecting and organizing content and experiences to increase value by simplifying tourists' choices. For [Richards \(2024\)](#), the curatorial turn in tourism allows artificial intelligence and augmented reality to be used as tools for organizing and presenting value-added tourism offers, which, according to the coding, constitute the category with the greatest influence. In regions with high cultural and natural diversity, such as Colombia, the post-pandemic transformations of cultural tourism described by [Gregorić \(2022\)](#) represent opportunities to offer organized and differentiated destinations that delimit the use of sustainable practices and combine them with other types of tourism.

5. Conclusions

The limited understanding of tourism activity, business dynamics, their relationship with the territory, and their impacts constituted the starting point for interpreting the perceptions of local and institutional actors regarding cultural tourism management in relation to local development and dialogue among knowledge systems. For this purpose, the qualitative study established dimensions, categories, and codes through semi-structured interviews with local actors and tourism-related institutions.

This article accounts for tourism opportunities through the provision of services adapted to tourists' needs, without encroaching on the territories' common-use resources. As an economic activity, tourism requires synergies that develop alternatives, facilitate processes, and strengthen tourism service providers. Currently, institutional support and intervention in communities are oriented toward meeting goals and objectives that, at times, disregard the context and problems faced by actors in the territories.

The most closely related dimensions affirm the link between tourism and development, recognizing that local dynamics are inseparable from this economic activity. The impacts of the tourism offer require actions that promote the sustainability of common goods, including natural and cultural heritage. In this field, the institutional framework supports tourism management through plans and programs designed to develop sustainable alternatives that add value to the tourism offer.

The main barriers and detractors of tourism activity concern the balance in the distribution of benefits among local actors, companies, and institutions that use heritage for their own benefit, as well as the sustainability of the territories. The relevance of institutional plans and programs in the sector is required from design to implementation. Equal opportunities are emphasized through the strengthening of collective work, dialogue among knowledge systems, and the value assigned to the exchange, transfer, and co-creation of knowledge as a development strategy.

The interpretation of cultural tourism in the post-COVID period and its correlation with dialogue among knowledge systems is established on the basis of local actors' capacity to participate in alternatives that facilitate their permanence in the sector while recognizing the social value of heritage. The capacities of tourism companies and organizations to improve their business models and offerings are highlighted, especially when these are oriented toward selective and fair tourism, local livelihoods, and destination sustainability.

Knowledge exchange is achieved when institutions promote and implement initiatives that involve tourism service providers as active participants in their development, drawing on their skills and knowledge to offer solutions that meet their needs and address tourism-related challenges. The continuity of this study is based on lessons learned that, in due course, may become new and improved practices for articulation in response to the interests and needs of actors working in cultural tourism. This process is supported by dialogue among knowledge systems as a mechanism for reducing the gaps or restrictions that arise in joint work or projects.

Regarding post-pandemic implications and opportunities, tourism offers potential alternatives for diversifying and structuring the tourism offer. Current trends refer to proximity tourism, resilient and regenerative tourism, the curatorial turn, augmented reality, and artificial intelligence. In cultural tourism, these trends imply the management of destinations and routes that offer greater added value and are recognized by tourists.

The continuity and contribution of the study lie in the integration of areas of knowledge that contribute to the construction of alternatives around common purposes for cultural tourism management among stakeholders. This refers to the visible social link expressed in norms and agreements, to the understanding of gaps, to local dynamics and capacities, and to actors' experience and socio-business trajectories in the territories. The continuity of this type of study depends on the creation of spaces for inter- and multicultural dialogue among the actors involved in the activity and on the establishment of mechanisms that support the continuity of processes as elements that add value to tourism activity.

The limitations of the study stem from the difficulty of relating the meanings expressed by the interviewed actors to the information available in the sector and from the lack of specialized databases that support these perceptions and validate the behavior of tourism activity with sufficient methodological rigor.

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Data Availability

The article provides the relevant data sources and links.

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