

SUMMARY OF ARTICLE: [HTTPS://DX.DOI.ORG/10.12795/REA.2025.I50.06](https://dx.doi.org/10.12795/REA.2025.I50.06)

## The study of social capital through the social network analysis for a participatory tourism management: a governance network proposal for Tierra Bobal (Valencia)

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### KEYWORDS

Stakeholders  
Decision-making  
Public Management of Tourism  
E-I Index

### INTRODUCTION

The need for more participatory decision-making on tourism management, greater inter-organizational learning and knowledge sharing that allows for the acquisition of social capital, helps to understand the ecosystem of relationships between the parties, and to assume that the increasingly complex nature of tourism requires a management system capable of responding to change. Tourism cannot be planned and managed from either the public or the private sector alone, as if the two were unconnected, antagonistic or disparate. The socioeconomic, cultural and territorial multidimensionality of tourism development justifies this need, which, by the way, is different depending on the particular characteristics of each destination, which is why tourism management models based on the principles of governance are more necessary than ever. Thus, governance networks have emerged in response to the increasing complexity of public policies and as a consequence of the shortcomings of traditional public management models. While it is true that interaction between actors is not a new phenomenon, this concept of governance network allows for a different way of conceptualizing the interaction between relevant stakeholders affected by public decisions.

### METHODOLOGY

The linkage of social capital to development processes has traditionally been linked to different areas or sectors such as, for example, education, health, rural development, but also gradually to the tourism sector. Social capital can contribute positively or negatively, as it can be used both for common or societal benefit and for self-benefit or the development of clientelist networks. The search for effective leadership in the territories is fundamental for the improvement of problem management. Although achieving leadership in the study of social networks is complex, since it is necessary to delve into three concepts: leadership, prestige and trust. This is why networks of actors are embedded in governance because of the interest in



collaborative decision-making processes and the establishment of public policies, establishing a new form of interaction (more horizontal, more participatory, more democratic).

The main objective of this article is to evaluate the stock of social capital present in Tierra Bobal for the construction of a governance team with a high degree of involvement in tourism development processes.

From the methodological point of view, a double analysis was carried out. On the one hand, from the perspective of social capital meetings were held with public, private and civil informants considered key to tourism development processes, generating an initial database of 150 people. From this list, the sample was filtered on the basis of a set of KPIs, distributed in two blocks, related to the optimal profile of the people who should form part of the governance team. KPIs (acronym for key performance indicator) are factors that are constructed and applied in the evaluation of activities, processes and people (Badawy *et al.*, 2016). For this research, a first block of seven KPIs was determined, which were used by the researchers to filter the first set of 150 candidates to form part of the governance team. After this first filter, only 45 relevant people remained, of which 26 agreed to take part in the subsequent interview, which lasted approximately 20 minutes and in which they had to assess a second set of eleven new KPIs. In one of these indicators, they were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 10 their 'interest in participating', as this was considered a critical KPI due to the importance of personal motivation for the achievement of this participatory body. 9 of the 26 people interviewed were left out of the EGOS network, but not out of the ALTERS network, as their interest in participating was rated below 8.

On the other hand, an analysis of the E-I index has been carried out, which allows the disaggregation of internal and external social capital based on substructures present in the network of actors. All this was done using the UCINET software. The study focuses on the configuration and coordination of the tourist brand Tierra Bobal, which is territorially contextualized in the Plana de Utiel-Requena. This is the westernmost and outermost region of the Comunitat Valenciana (Spain), with an important traditional and cultural value linked to the exploitation and commercialization of products derived from viticulture.

## RESULTS

303

Among the main results, the network of actors interviewed presents a high density, but with a medium distance between the actors in the network, i.e., despite being a densely connected network, the distance between them is not so close. With respect to the entry of relationships between actors, despite having a high prestige of entry to the network (there are a large number of actors who are identified by others as prestigious), the truth is that the degree of exit is low, since the actors tend to identify few people as relevant. Reciprocity, knowledge and recognition among the actors is low, which is related to the indicator of the degree of exit, and is also a negative aspect. Actors recognize few actors in the network and also do not recognize each other. In other words, recognition is concentrated in very few people and they hardly recognize the other actors. The indicators and the network of trust are less density and the network of relationships is much closer than that of prestige, but tends to be more concentrated in a few people. Therefore, it is a network with great control of information and, in short, great power.

Regarding the selection of the governance network, nine stakeholders have been selected, plus two reserves, which concentrate the most positive levels of the SNA indicators. This classification is made with those stakeholders that lead the different indicators, from highest to lowest, and considering the limit of nine actors that, although it is related to the number of municipalities in Tierra Bobal, does not correspond directly to each of the territories. In addition, it was considered relevant to leave two actors as a reserve, in case any of the nine selected actors dropped out in any of the assumptions. In general, very few actors have very high levels in the different indicators, except for proximity. Finally, among the main evidences of the analysis of internal and external social capital (E-I Index), the presence of a large number of external relationships is demonstrated, which is very positive for the sustainability and maintenance of tourism development processes. However, some substructure analyses show a worrying lack or non-strengthening of internal relationships and, therefore, of bonding social capital.



## CONCLUSION

In short, the results of SNA and the E-I index show a network with weak internal structures, but whose territorial and social dynamics are based on the development, maintenance and strengthening of external links. However, these external links tend to be made on an individualized or personal basis with the outside world, which is why they are associated with active positions within the network, i.e., with those actors who are better positioned and more central to the network. The fact that there is an excessive concentration of information, power, prestige, etc. among only four actors can influence the correct development of the internal SC and the network.

Endogamic networks tend to concentrate information and may even use it as a tool for control and power, which can lead to large and serious differences among the actors in the area. Failure to exclude some of its most central actors would certainly affect the construction of a decentralized governance network. It would move the network away from a PNG (Participant-Governed Network), where the actors have informal and horizontal relationships, with decentralized bottom-up management in which all are responsible for internal management and share common objectives, and towards a LOG (Lead Organization-Governed Network) in which centralized management and asymmetric power prevail.

The study highlights the need to continue supporting tourism development by following a process of evaluation and analysis of the different actors or groups to improve the processes of participation and, especially, decision-making, but in a more objective, coherent and efficient manner, without necessarily responding to other parameters framed within the clientelistic networks of development programs and projects.