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Stakeholder Engagement, Organizational Legitimacy and DMO Performance: A Stakeholder-Based Perspective

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Abstract
*Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) operate in environments characterized by multiple public and private stakeholders on whom they depend for access to resources, information, project implementation, and collective action. This configuration gives stakeholder relationships an importance that goes beyond destination governance alone. It raises the question of how a DMO's ability to create value for its different stakeholders contributes simultaneously to stakeholder engagement, organizational legitimacy, and organizational performance. Drawing on stakeholder theory and resource dependence theory, this article develops a relational perspective on DMO performance. The relationship between the organization and its stakeholders is conceptualized as a reciprocal exchange: stakeholders provide resources, information, cooperation, support, and legitimacy, while the DMO is expected to create value in return by addressing stakeholder expectations and collective destination objectives. The analysis is grounded in a quantitative survey conducted among 120 actors and stakeholders of the Agadir-Souss-Massa Regional Tourism Council and in the performance assessment model developed in the underlying research. Cooperation, involvement, mobilization, and coordination provide an empirical anchor for the stakeholder-engagement dimension. The article ultimately proposes a framework in which stakeholder value creation, engagement, legitimacy, and performance form a reinforcing loop. It therefore argues that DMO performance is also a form of **relational performance**, constructed through the organization's ability to be perceived as useful, credible, and legitimate by the actors on whom collective destination action depends.*

Keywords: *DMO; stakeholders; stakeholder engagement; organizational legitimacy; value creation; organizational performance; tourism destination.*

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I. Introduction

Tourism destinations are systems of actors whose performance cannot be produced by a single organization. Tourism businesses, public administrations, local and regional authorities, professional organizations, investors, local communities, and other partners each control part of the resources, capabilities, and information required for destination development. The Destination Management Organization therefore occupies a central position within a network whose components it does not control hierarchically.

This configuration gives stakeholder relationships particular importance. A DMO may have an institutional mandate, a formal organizational structure, and its own resources, yet still be unable to perform its missions effectively if it does not benefit from stakeholder involvement and support. Its capacity for action depends partly on its ability to obtain information, cooperation, resources, participation in decision-making, and commitment to collective projects.

The relationship is, however, reciprocal. Stakeholders do not sustainably provide these contributions without expecting something in return from the organization. They assess the DMO according to its capacity to create value: useful information, support for business development, destination visibility, coordination, services, strategic direction, networking opportunities, and contribution to the collective objectives of the tourism territory.

This logic requires moving beyond a conception of performance focused exclusively on the organization's own results. The underlying research explicitly considers that organizational performance is no longer limited to the achievement of internal objectives; it also includes the capacity to respond to the needs and expectations negotiated with key stakeholders. These stakeholders are particularly important because they may provide financial, human, and material resources, as well as **social legitimacy**.

This proposition is especially relevant in the case of DMOs. Their performance and legitimacy depend on their ability to perform their different roles in destination development, but also on their capacity to satisfy the interests of the groups that constitute and support them and, more broadly, the destination's stakeholders.

Legitimacy therefore becomes a central issue. It should not be confused with a legal mandate alone. An organization may be formally authorized to intervene in destination management while receiving limited recognition from local actors. Conversely, a DMO that demonstrates usefulness, provides relevant services, takes stakeholder expectations into account, and encourages participation may strengthen both its acceptance and its credibility.

Performance and legitimacy are thus closely intertwined. Legitimacy facilitates access to resources, cooperation, and mobilization. These relational resources, in turn, strengthen the DMO's capacity to perform its missions and create value. When such value is recognized by stakeholders, it may reinforce their engagement and further consolidate the organization's legitimacy.

This logic is reflected in the literature mobilized by the research. In hybrid organizations, interdependence between the organization and its stakeholders is based on exchange: stakeholders provide resources and, in return, the organization creates value by responding to their different interests. Likewise, external relationships are particularly important for public and nonprofit organizations because of their dependence on external sources of funding, participation, and legitimacy.

The research problem underlying this article can therefore be formulated as follows:

How does a DMO's ability to create value for its different stakeholders contribute simultaneously to the construction of its performance and its legitimacy?

The resulting research question is:

To what extent does stakeholder value creation foster stakeholder engagement, strengthen DMO organizational legitimacy, and thereby contribute to organizational performance?

The positioning of this article differs from an approach focused exclusively on governance. The main issue is not how stakeholders are coordinated, but **why they choose to engage with the DMO and how that engagement contributes to building the organization's capacity for action**.

The article therefore develops a conceptual sequence based on reciprocity:

Stakeholder Value Creation → Stakeholder Engagement → Organizational Legitimacy → Capacity for Action → DMO Performance

This sequence should not, however, be interpreted as strictly linear. Higher performance may itself enable the DMO to create greater value for stakeholders, thereby generating a cumulative loop between value, engagement, legitimacy, and performance.

1. Theoretical Background and Methodology

1.1. The DMO as an Organization Dependent on Its Stakeholders

Stakeholder theory offers a particularly relevant framework for understanding DMO performance. In its general sense, it shifts the analysis away from an organization focused exclusively on its own objectives toward an organization embedded in a system of relationships with groups that may affect its activities or be affected by them.

This perspective is especially appropriate for tourism destinations. The fragmentation of the tourism product and the distribution of resources among multiple organizations make it impossible to conceive destination management through a single authority. The DMO operates in an environment where a substantial share of the resources required for its missions lies outside its organizational boundaries.

Stakeholder theory therefore helps identify the requirements of different actors and the contributions expected from them, while ensuring that these elements guide organizational strategies and processes. The thesis explicitly emphasizes that a performance measurement framework giving substantial importance to stakeholders is particularly relevant to DMOs because it enables them to monitor changes in the stakeholder environment and foster involvement around a common strategic direction.

Performance thus becomes inseparable from the relationship with the environment.

This idea is reinforced by resource dependence theory. From this perspective, the organization does not necessarily possess all the means required for its survival and functioning. It therefore depends on external actors who may control critical resources.

In the case of DMOs, these resources may take multiple forms: funding, expertise, market information, tourism data, infrastructure, access to customers, investment capacity, institutional support, territorial knowledge, or participation in projects.

The research recalls that, from this perspective, organizational performance assessment involves evaluating the organization's capacity to respond to the needs and expectations of key stakeholders who are sources of resources or who may affect its activities.

The relationship, however, cannot be interpreted in only one direction.

If the DMO depends on stakeholders' resources, stakeholders may also depend on certain resources controlled or coordinated by the DMO: collective visibility, information, market access, expertise, coordination, territorial representation, or the capacity to structure joint projects.

The relationship can therefore be represented as an exchange:
Stakeholder Resources → DMO → Value Created for Stakeholders
This reciprocity constitutes the first foundation of relational performance.

1.2. The Specificity of the DMO as a Hybrid Organization
DMOs often display another distinctive characteristic: their hybrid nature.
They frequently operate at the interface between public and private spheres. This exposes the organization to different systems of values and expectations.
Public actors may prioritize legality, accountability, equity, territorial development, and collective interest.
Private firms may place greater emphasis on effectiveness, commercial visibility, innovation, market access, and the profitability of actions.
Professional organizations may expect services, representation, information, or support.
Local communities may assign particular importance to economic benefits, employment, quality of life, and sustainability.
The research emphasizes that hybrid organizations may face ambiguity arising from divergent objectives, funding structures, and interests. In such a context, DMO managers must be able to manage stakeholder relationships and tensions; effectiveness is then linked to trust and engagement, without which the organization's credibility and legitimacy may be challenged.
This plurality of expectations rules out a uniform conception of value creation.
Value does not necessarily have the same meaning for all stakeholders.
What constitutes value for a local authority may differ from what a tourism business expects. The DMO must therefore develop a capacity to translate and arbitrate among several systems of expectations.
Performance lies less in fully and simultaneously satisfying all demands than in building a sufficiently accepted balance to maintain cooperation and enable collective action. This position reinforces the role of legitimacy.
The DMO must be recognized as an actor capable of integrating diverse interests without being perceived as the exclusive instrument of any single group.

1.3. Stakeholder Value Creation
The concept of value creation occupies a central position in the relationship between an organization and its stakeholders.
From a stakeholder perspective, value should not be reduced to monetary outcomes. It refers more broadly to the benefits, resources, services, or effects that different actors derive from their relationship with the organization.
Applied to DMOs, value creation can take various forms.
A tourism business may value market information, collective promotion, destination branding, access to tourism-flow data, or support for commercialization.
A public actor may value the DMO's ability to structure tourism development, coordinate operators, generate information, and contribute to regional economic objectives.
A professional organization may expect services, institutional representation, or the ability to federate actors around common issues.
This value-creation logic is particularly visible in information flows. The research points out that DMOs engage in both inbound information and research flows and outbound information flows with stakeholders. Their performance is therefore linked to their ability to process acquired data and disseminate it usefully to local partners.
Information is therefore not merely a resource collected from stakeholders. It becomes value when transformed by the DMO into useful knowledge.
The same logic applies to business support. Destination-development programs may help strengthen the capabilities of local operators. The research explicitly identifies DMO support for business development as an important component of its external performance perspective.
The relationship can therefore be summarized as follows:
Information + Expertise + Coordination + Services + Visibility + Support
↓
Perceived DMO Value
Perceived value is fundamental because it answers a simple question from the stakeholder's perspective:
Why should we support this DMO and participate in its actions?
The more the organization is perceived as useful in achieving stakeholders' individual or collective objectives, the more likely it is to obtain their engagement.
1.4. From Value Creation to Stakeholder Engagement
Engagement should not be confused with formal institutional presence.

A stakeholder may sit on a council, be invited to meetings, or formally belong to a partnership without being genuinely involved in action.
Engagement reflects a higher level of relationship.
It implies that actors are willing to devote time, information, resources, or energy to the achievement of common objectives.
The research provides a concrete empirical anchor for this concept through the dimensions of governance. It considers that the decision-making system should specify the mechanisms of stakeholder involvement, participation, consultation, and negotiation. Mobilization then refers to the DMO's capacity to bring actors together around a vision and strategy, while cooperation and coordination reflect stakeholder commitment to collective implementation.
Several levels can therefore be distinguished:
Information → Consultation → Involvement → Mobilization → Engagement → Cooperation
This continuum makes it possible to move beyond a binary conception of participation.
Value creation plays an essential role here. When stakeholders perceive that their relationship with the DMO provides them with utility, they have stronger incentives to participate in and support its initiatives.
Engagement may then take the form of data sharing, participation in strategic processes, financial or technical contribution to projects, cooperation with other actors, and acceptance of common orientations.
Value alone, however, is not sufficient, Trust also matters.
Stakeholders must consider that the DMO uses their contributions fairly, respects its commitments, and pursues objectives that are sufficiently compatible with their expectations.
Thus:
Perceived Value + Trust → Engagement
Engagement then becomes an organizational resource.
A DMO surrounded by engaged stakeholders has a greater capacity for action than an organization whose partners remain passive or distrustful.

1.5. Organizational Legitimacy as a Relational Resource
Legitimacy is one of the central concepts for understanding why some DMOs are able to mobilize partners while others face greater difficulty.
It must be distinguished from formal authority, a mandate gives the organization an institutional position.
Legitimacy gives it **social and organizational acceptance**.
A DMO may therefore be officially assigned specific functions without stakeholders necessarily recognizing its practical capacity or right to exercise leadership over the destination.
Legitimacy is constructed through several dimensions: credibility, trust, perceived usefulness, transparency, recognition of competencies, and the ability to represent collective interests.
The results mobilized in the research reinforce this interpretation. Volgger and Pechlaner are cited to show that DMO success depends on networking capability and that DMO authority is indirectly influenced by stakeholder acceptance, that is, by legitimacy.
Legitimacy should therefore not be treated as a fixed attribute.
It constitutes **relational capital** that may strengthen or erode depending on organizational behavior.
This idea is particularly important for DMOs because they generally cannot impose their orientations on other organizations through hierarchical authority.
Their leadership depends on their ability to have their proposals recognized as useful and credible.
Transparency can also contribute to legitimacy. The research notes that DMOs should communicate their results transparently, account for the use of entrusted resources, explain achieved outcomes, and accept responsibility for their interventions.
The following relationship can therefore be proposed:
Value Creation + Participation + Transparency + Trust
↓
Organizational Legitimacy
Legitimacy thus becomes a mechanism that converts stakeholder recognition into organizational capacity for action.
1.6. Engagement, Legitimacy, and DMO Performance
Performance can now be linked to the two previous concepts.
A DMO benefiting from a high level of stakeholder engagement has better access to several essential resources: information, expertise, participation, financing, cooperation, and institutional support.
Legitimacy also reduces the relational costs of collective action. When an organization is considered credible and useful, partners have fewer reasons to systematically challenge its initiatives or withdraw from collective processes.

The relationship can therefore be represented as follows:
Value Creation→ Stakeholder Engagement→ Organizational Legitimacy→ Access to Resources and Cooperation→ DMO Performance
However, the relationship can also operate in the opposite direction.
Higher performance strengthens the DMO's ability to demonstrate usefulness. Visible and transparent results may improve credibility and reinforce stakeholders' willingness to continue engaging.
The system is therefore circular rather than strictly linear:
Value → Engagement → Legitimacy → Performance → Renewed Capacity for Value Creation
This logic directly reflects the multidimensional approach to performance adopted in the research. It emphasizes that effectiveness includes the satisfaction of stakeholder requirements and that efficiency concerns the productive mobilization of resources in order to deliver such satisfaction.
DMO organizational performance can therefore be interpreted, at least partly, as **relational performance**.

1.7. Research Propositions and Conceptual Framework

Unlike some variables in the doctoral model, stakeholder engagement and organizational legitimacy were not operationalized as two autonomous latent constructs in the original survey.
It would therefore be methodologically excessive to present the relationships proposed here as causal hypotheses already tested through PLS-SEM.
Instead, the article formulates four theoretical propositions grounded in the literature and in the empirical dimensions available.
P1. DMO stakeholder value creation fosters stakeholder engagement in collective action.
P2. The quality and intensity of stakeholder engagement contribute to building and reinforcing DMO organizational legitimacy.
P3. Higher organizational legitimacy strengthens the DMO's capacity to mobilize resources, information, and cooperation and thereby supports organizational performance.
P4. DMO performance reinforces its capacity to create stakeholder value and thus contributes to a cumulative legitimacy–engagement loop.
Figure 1. Stakeholder-Based Framework of DMO Performance
Stakeholder Value Creation→ Stakeholder Engagement→ Organizational Legitimacy→ Access to Resources / Cooperation / Capacity for Action→ DMO Performance→ Reinforced Capacity for Value Creation
The proposal is therefore not a fully validated causal chain, but a **theoretical reciprocity mechanism** that the available empirical evidence partially illuminates.

1.8. Methodology

The empirical grounding of this article relies on the study conducted with the Agadir-Souss-Massa Regional Tourism Council, considered as the regional management organization for the Agadir destination.
The original research adopted a quantitative hypothetico-deductive approach. A questionnaire was administered to **120 DMO actors and stakeholders**. The general model included five determinants—strategic management, governance, external marketing, destination operational management, and internal DMO management—with DMO performance as the dependent variable. Model assessment was carried out using PLS-SEM.
The present article does not claim to test a new structural model containing engagement and legitimacy as autonomous constructs.
Rather, it provides a stakeholder-based reinterpretation of theoretically and empirically relevant elements from the original study.
The most directly usable dimension concerns effective destination governance. It notably includes decision-making quality, cooperation, involvement and mobilization, and coordination. These indicators make it possible to observe several concrete manifestations of stakeholder engagement.
Other elements mobilized concern external value creation by the DMO, dependence on stakeholder resources, stakeholder satisfaction, and trust and legitimacy mechanisms discussed in the theoretical framework.

II. Results and Discussion

2.1. Stakeholders as a Constitutive Dimension of DMO Performance

The first result of this reinterpretation concerns the place of stakeholders in the definition of performance itself.
The conception adopted in the research does not restrict performance to the achievement of internally defined objectives. It also includes responsiveness to the expectations and needs of key environmental actors. This approach is particularly important for DMOs.
An organization responsible for managing a destination cannot be assessed solely through what it produces within its own organizational boundaries. The destination is a system whose resources are distributed among multiple organizations.

DMO performance therefore depends on its ability to transform this plurality into productive relationships.
This leads to a first interpretative proposition: **DMO performance is partly relational performance.**
In other words, what matters is not only the quality of internal procedures or the number of actions carried out, but also the organization's ability to build and maintain relationships with the actors required for its action.
This interpretation is consistent with the literature mobilized in the thesis. The degree of stakeholder involvement and support achieved by a DMO is notably regarded as a clear determinant of DMO performance.

***2.2. Involvement, Mobilization, Cooperation, and Coordination as Manifestations of Engageme*nt**

The second observation concerns the empirical content of governance.
The research retains four final dimensions: decision-making quality, cooperation, involvement and mobilization, and coordination.
These dimensions can be related to different levels of engagement.
Decision-making quality first concerns the organization's openness to stakeholders and the mechanisms through which they can intervene in decisions.
Involvement and mobilization represent a higher level: the objective is no longer merely to allow actors to express an opinion, but to bring them together around a shared vision and common objectives.
Cooperation then implies effective contribution to action.
Finally, coordination reflects the capacity to align contributions from actors with different resources, competencies, and objectives.
The continuum can therefore be represented as:
Participation → Involvement → Mobilization → Cooperation → Coordination
This interpretation confirms that engagement should not be reduced to stakeholder presence in formal bodies.
An engaged stakeholder is one who accepts contributing to collective action.
The DMO's role is therefore to transform institutional participation into operational engagement.

2.3. Value Creation as a Foundation of Engagement

Why would stakeholders choose to engage? The answer can be sought in the value they associate with the relationship with the DMO.
The research provides several indications, The DMO collects and transforms information from destination actors and then returns useful knowledge to them. The quality of information processing and dissemination contributes to stronger relationships.
Likewise, support services for firms and initiatives aimed at developing local capabilities constitute a direct form of value created for tourism operators. Value may therefore be material or immaterial.
It may take the form of visibility, information, network access, expertise, institutional support, or the opportunity to participate in shaping territorial strategy.
This relationship invites us to reformulate engagement:
Stakeholder engagement is partly a response to perceived organizational value.
Actors engage more strongly when they perceive that the organization contributes tangibly to their objectives or to those they share with the destination.
This proposition avoids a normative view in which stakeholders should cooperate simply because they belong to the territory.
Engagement must be **produced through the relationship**.

2.4. From Value Creation to Organizational Legitimacy

One of the most significant passages in the research concerns precisely the relationship between services delivered, relationships, and legitimacy.
The thesis indicates that strong knowledge of the destination offering enables the DMO to develop better services for its members and to **strengthen its relationships and legitimacy**, leading to more dynamic stakeholder engagement.
This sequence provides a direct foundation for the mechanism proposed in the article:
Better Services→ Higher Perceived Value→ Stronger Relationships→ Greater Legitimacy→ More Dynamic Engagement
Legitimacy therefore appears as a product of the organization's recognized usefulness.
A DMO does not become legitimate merely because an institution assigns it a formal competence.
It reinforces its legitimacy when it demonstrates its ability to transform that competence into results and services valued by stakeholders.
This legitimacy has a pragmatic dimension: the organization is supported because it is considered useful.
It also has a relational dimension: the organization is recognized because it takes stakeholders into account and builds relationships of trust.

2.5. The Reciprocal Relationship Between Engagement and Legitimacy

A strictly linear causal interpretation would nevertheless be insufficient.

Legitimacy can foster engagement just as engagement can reinforce legitimacy.

The research shows that effective cooperation depends partly on stakeholder trust in and legitimacy of the DMO. These relational resources enable the organization to involve actors, federate them, obtain their commitment, and foster cooperation.

Thus: **Legitimacy → Engagement**

But engagement can also produce legitimacy.

When a significant number of actors choose to participate in DMO initiatives, that mobilization may itself signal that the organization is recognized and considered relevant.

The relationship becomes a loop:

Legitimacy → Engagement → Cooperation → Results → Legitimacy

This circularity is particularly appropriate for tourism destinations.

DMOs generally lack the power to compel actors to cooperate. Their effective authority is therefore progressively constructed through the outcomes of relationships.

2.6. Legitimacy as a Performance Resource

Legitimacy is not merely a symbolic consequence of good relationships.

It has concrete organizational effects.

A legitimate organization can obtain information more easily.

It can mobilize actors more effectively.

It can facilitate partnerships.

It can reduce resistance to strategy implementation.

It can increase stakeholders' willingness to contribute resources or expertise.

Legitimacy therefore becomes a **coordination and mobilization resource**.

This conception is consistent with the idea that DMO success depends on networking capability and that its authority is itself linked to stakeholder acceptance.

The performance mechanism can therefore be specified as follows:

Legitimacy→ Easier Access to Resources and Stakeholders→ Lower Coordination Costs→ Higher Cooperation→ Greater Implementation Capacity→ Performance

Legitimacy therefore functions less as an end result than as a multiplier of organizational capacity.

2.7. Transparency and Accountability as Legitimizing Mechanisms

The construction of legitimacy does not depend solely on the services delivered, It also depends on the organization's capacity to demonstrate its results.

This dimension is particularly important for public, quasi-public, or hybrid organizations that use resources from multiple sources.

The research emphasizes that the DMO should communicate its results transparently, explain the assumptions and objectives of its programs, measure achievements, disclose outcomes to stakeholders, and account for the use of entrusted resources.

Transparency contributes to legitimacy in two ways.

First, it reduces information asymmetry between the organization and its stakeholders.

Second, it enables actors to assess whether the promised value has actually been delivered.

The model can therefore be extended:

Value Creation + Transparent Demonstration of Value→ Credibility→ Legitimacy

Performance measurement is thus not merely an internal management device.

It also becomes an **instrument of external legitimization**.

2.8. The Virtuous Circle of Relational Performance

The different mechanisms identified above make it possible to propose a dynamic interpretation of performance.

At the starting point, stakeholders make certain resources available.

The DMO uses these resources to produce services, information, strategic orientations, and collective actions.

If stakeholders perceive value in these outputs, their trust and engagement may increase.

This engagement then strengthens the organization's legitimacy and facilitates access to further resources and cooperation.

Its capacity for action is consequently reinforced, potentially improving performance and increasing its ability to create value again.

Figure 2. Stakeholder–DMO Reciprocity Loop
Resources Provided by Stakeholders→ DMO Capabilities and Actions→ Value Created for Stakeholders→ Trust and Engagement→ Legitimacy→ Greater Access to Resources and Cooperation → DMO Performance→ Greater Capacity for Value Creation
This mechanism is particularly consistent with the hybrid-organization framework mobilized in the research, in which stakeholders provide resources and receive value in return according to their interests.
Relational performance thus becomes **self-reinforcing**, provided that the DMO continues to create genuine value.
The opposite mechanism is also possible, A decline in perceived value may reduce engagement.
Lower engagement may weaken legitimacy, Reduced legitimacy may make access to resources and cooperation more difficult.
The organization's capacity to produce results may then deteriorate further.
A vicious circle may therefore also emerge: **Low Value → Disengagement → Loss of Legitimacy → Fewer Resources → Lower Performance**

2.9. Theoretical Implications

The first contribution of the article is to broaden the conception of DMO performance toward **relational performance**.
Performance does not depend only on internal resources or completed activities. It also depends on the quality of the relational system that enables the DMO to access the resources required for its missions.
The second contribution lies in recognizing the dual position of stakeholders.
They are simultaneously:
resource providers and **value recipients.**
This duality avoids two reductive interpretations: one that views stakeholders only as beneficiaries and another that treats them solely as resources to be mobilized.
The third contribution concerns legitimacy.
Here, legitimacy is not viewed as a legal attribute given once and for all, but as an **organizational resource produced and reproduced through stakeholder relationships**.
Finally, the article proposes a circular logic:
Value Creation ↔ Engagement ↔ Legitimacy ↔ Performance.
This circularity better reflects the interdependence that characterizes tourism destinations.

2.10. Managerial Implications

For DMO managers, the main implication is that stakeholder management should not be limited to institutional representation or the number of meetings organized.
Performance management should simultaneously examine value creation, engagement, trust, and legitimacy.

Table 1. Stakeholder Relationship Dashboard

Dimension	Managerial Question	Examples of Indicators
Stakeholder value	What concrete value do we create for each stakeholder category?	Usefulness of services, information provided, support, visibility
Engagement	Do stakeholders genuinely contribute?	Participation, resources mobilized, contribution to projects
Cooperation	Are actors willing to work together?	Joint projects, information sharing, partnerships
Trust	Is the DMO considered reliable?	Reported trust, fulfillment of commitments, continuity of relationships
Legitimacy	Is the organization recognized as useful and credible?	Acceptance, support for initiatives, recognition of leadership
Relational performance	Do relationships improve our capacity for action?	Resources obtained, projects implemented, collective objectives achieved

Such a dashboard would enable a shift from a mainly administrative stakeholder approach toward **relationship management**.
Managers should therefore regularly ask four questions:
What value are we creating?
What level of engagement are we obtaining?
What level of trust and legitimacy do we possess?
To what extent do these relationships improve our ability to accomplish our missions?
This approach is also useful for stakeholder segmentation. Not all stakeholders provide the same resources or expect the same type of value. Relationships should therefore be adapted to the characteristics of each stakeholder group rather than organized through a uniform mechanism.

2.11. Limitations and Future Research

The main limitation concerns the empirical nature of the proposed framework.
The original study contains several dimensions directly related to involvement, mobilization, cooperation, and coordination. It also mobilizes theoretically the concepts of trust, legitimacy, and value creation.

However, **stakeholder engagement and organizational legitimacy were not measured as autonomous latent constructs in the original PLS model**.
It would therefore be excessive to consider that the entire chain proposed in this article has already been empirically validated.
The framework developed here constitutes a theoretical construction **grounded in the concepts and results of the research**, but it requires specific empirical validation.
Future research could develop separate measurement scales and test the following model:
Stakeholder Value Creation → Stakeholder Engagement → Organizational Legitimacy → DMO Performance
Legitimacy could in particular be tested as a mediating variable between engagement and performance.
Another extension could examine the relationship longitudinally in order to test the feedback loop:
DMO Performance → Stakeholder Value Creation → Future Engagement
Finally, multi-group analysis could determine whether legitimization mechanisms differ across public actors, tourism businesses, professional associations, and other stakeholder categories.

III. Conclusion

This article sought to analyze how a Destination Management Organization's ability to create value for its different stakeholders can contribute simultaneously to the construction of its performance and legitimacy.
The perspective developed here leads to considering stakeholder relationships not as a peripheral aspect of DMO activity, but as one of the mechanisms that make organizational action possible.
Destination actors provide the organization with essential resources: information, expertise, participation, funding, cooperation, and support. In return, they expect the DMO to provide value that justifies their engagement: services, information, strategic direction, visibility, coordination, support, and contribution to collective objectives.
The DMO's capacity to create such value can reinforce trust, involvement, and cooperation. These relationships, in turn, contribute to building organizational legitimacy.
Legitimacy, in this perspective, is not merely symbolic recognition.
It constitutes an **organizational resource**.
A DMO recognized as useful, credible, and legitimate has a stronger capacity to mobilize actors, obtain information and resources, build partnerships, and implement strategic orientations.
Its performance is therefore partly produced through the quality of stakeholder relationships.
The central mechanism can be summarized as follows:
Create Value → Generate Engagement → Build Legitimacy → Strengthen Capacity for Action → Improve Performance → Create More Value
This perspective ultimately moves beyond a conception of the DMO as an organization that simply manages stakeholders. The issue is deeper.
The DMO depends on its stakeholders in order to perform, but it must also perform in order to continue deserving their engagement and legitimacy.
It is this reciprocity that makes the relationship between the DMO and its stakeholders a central mechanism in the construction of organizational performance.

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