



Reconfiguration of the federal tourism agenda in Mexico, 2001-2024: a longitudinal documentary analysis informed by Grounded Theory procedures

Reconfiguración de la agenda turística federal en México, 2001-2024: análisis documental longitudinal informado por procedimientos de Teoría Fundamentada

Yoan Hernández Flores¹  , Verenice Sánchez Castillo²  , Libardo Ramón Polanía²  

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Studies on tourism policy often analyze isolated government programs or periods, paying less attention to the longitudinal changes in state agendas. This research analyzes the reconfiguration of the Mexican government's tourism agenda between 2001 and 2024.

Methodology: A longitudinal document analysis was conducted, informed by Grounded Theory procedures, particularly initial coding, constant comparison, memorandum writing, and progressive integration of categories. Eight federal planning documents were analyzed: four National Development Plans and four Sectoral Tourism Programs.

Results and discussion: Using a coding guide for the analysis of government tourism agendas developed by the authors, 1,488 coding occurrences were identified. These were subsequently integrated into nine analytical categories. Longitudinal comparison allowed for the identification of three agenda configurations: one oriented toward competitiveness; another toward strengthening governance and institutional capacities; and a third focused on well-being, social inclusion, and territorial development.

Conclusions: Overall, the analysis shows that the formal tourism planning agenda in Mexico has not changed simply due to a shift in priorities between administrations, but rather through the persistence of categories, the redefinition of their functions, and the modification of their hierarchy.

Keywords: Public administration, regional development, governance, development policy, government policy.

JEL Classification: R58; Z32; Z38.

RESUMEN

Introducción: Los estudios sobre política turística suelen analizar programas o períodos gubernamentales aislados, con menor atención a los cambios longitudinales de las agendas estatales. La presente investigación analiza la reconfiguración de la agenda gubernamental del turismo en México entre 2001 y 2024.

Metodología: Se realizó un análisis documental longitudinal informado por procedimientos de la Teoría Fundamentada, particularmente codificación inicial, comparación constante, elaboración de memorandos e integración progresiva de categorías. Se analizaron ocho documentos de planeación federal: cuatro Planes Nacionales de Desarrollo y cuatro Programas Sectoriales de Turismo.

Resultados y discusión: Mediante una guía de codificación para el análisis de las agendas gubernamentales de turismo elaborada por los autores, se identificaron 1488 ocurrencias de codificación. Posteriormente, se integraron en nueve categorías analíticas. La comparación longitudinal permitió distinguir tres configuraciones de la agenda: una orientada por la competitividad; otra por el fortalecimiento de la gobernanza y las capacidades institucionales; y otra centrada en el bienestar, la inclusión social y el desarrollo territorial.

Conclusiones: En su conjunto, el análisis evidencia que la agenda formal de planeación turística no ha cambiado en México solo por la sustitución de prioridades entre administraciones, sino mediante la permanencia de categorías, la redefinición de sus funciones y la modificación de su jerarquía.

Palabras clave: Administración pública, desarrollo regional, gobernabilidad, política de desarrollo, política gubernamental.

Clasificación JEL: R58; Z32; Z38.

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¹Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla. Puebla, México.

²Universidad de la Amazonia. Florencia, Colombia



INTRODUCTION

Tourism policies have played a significant role in defining priorities, objectives, and instruments for government intervention (Torres et al., 2025; Velasco, 2016; Yang et al., 2026). This is no longer limited to the sector's growth but now incorporates elements such as governance, sustainability, institutional coordination, resilience, and inclusion, broadening the understanding of tourism as a field of public policy and not merely as an economic activity for territories (Aguinis et al., 2023; Croes et al., 2024; Ho & Kim, 2025).

Research published in the last three decades on tourism public policy has undergone remarkable conceptual maturation. Among the earliest studies are those by Gunn (1988) and Inskeep (1991), which were characterized by normative approaches generally focused on planning for tourism growth, as well as on destination promotion and the sector's administrative coordination. Subsequently, authors such as Bramwell and Lane (2012), Hall (2008), and Dredge and Jenkins (2007) began to interpret tourism policies in which the relationships between states, markets, and society acquire a central role in explaining the formulation and implementation of public decisions.

This conceptual shift allowed for the expansion of the field's scientific agenda, in which new categories focused on territory and community were defined as fundamental analytical axes for understanding public intervention in tourism (Dredge & Jamal, 2015; Hall, 2019; Sant'Anna et al., 2025). This was accentuated by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to new studies and debates on the State's capacity to guide the transformation of tourism systems, generating interest in building more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable development models (Abdelmalak, 2025; Hall & Seyfi, 2020; Sharma et al., 2021; Oliveira, 2022).

While in this context official planning instruments can be interpreted as formal expressions of the government agenda, since they condense diagnoses, objectives, priorities, and courses of action recognized by the State, these documents are not equivalent to the implemented policy, nor do they allow for direct inferences about its territorial outcomes, its multi-level governance dynamics, or the concrete effects of each of these. Therefore, its analytical utility lies in its ability to examine the agenda formally represented in government programmatic discourse, clearly defining the scope of inferences that can be drawn from the documentary corpus.

Despite the growth of studies on tourism policy, a significant portion of academic production continues to focus on specific programs, particular reforms, or defined government periods (Arévalo, 2025; Schenkel & Almeida, 2015; Thao, 2025). These approaches, while valuable, tend to offer synchronic readings; that is, they present situated analyses of a specific moment, with less capacity to reconstruct how government priorities change, remain the same, or are reorganized when comparing long-term planning instruments. This limitation raises the need to consider the extent to which the main frameworks for public policy change allow us to address the longitudinal dynamics of a formal agenda.

The main public policy change frameworks provide relevant tools, but they have limitations for studying the longitudinal transformation of a formal tourism agenda. Within the main public policy change theories, fundamental contributions are offered for understanding this phenomenon. Kingdon's Multiple Streams Framework (2011) analyzes the incorporation of issues into the agenda through the convergence of streams, but it offers fewer elements for tracking the trajectory of institutionalized priorities across several government periods. On the other hand, Sabatier and Weible's (2007) *The Advocacy Coalition Framework* emphasizes the role of learning and coalitions of actors.

The authors revisit the proposal of Corbin and Strauss (2015), as it allows for constructing an explanation of the phenomenon based on open coding, constant comparison, and the progressive integration of categories, without imposing a change mechanism beforehand or turning documents into evidence of processes they do not contain.

Within the Latin American context, the Mexican case is particularly relevant for examining this issue because a continuous and comparable sequence of federal tourism planning instruments is available between 2001 and 2024, including instruments such as the National Development Plans (NDP) and the Sectoral Tourism Plans (STP). A temporal analysis of these instruments allows for the identification of variations, shifts, continuities, and reorganizations in the formulation of tourism priorities within different political contexts and under different programmatic orientations.

In this sense, the selection of the corpus is based on specific criteria: its official nature, its strategic function within the federal planning system, and its institutional comparability across administrations. The study's aim is not

to demonstrate a specific type of change beforehand, but rather to analyze how priorities, categories, and hierarchical relationships are reorganized within the main federal tourism planning instruments. This delimitation is important from an epistemological point of view, as it avoids attributing an explanation to the empirical material a priori and maintains coherence with the tools of Grounded Theory, which is oriented toward constructing interpretations grounded in the corpus.

The purpose of this article is to longitudinally analyze the government agenda formally represented in Mexico's federal tourism planning instruments between 2001 and 2024, in order to identify changes in its priorities, categories, and hierarchical relationships. Grounded Theory procedures are used for this purpose, as they offer systematic processes of coding, constant comparison, and conceptual integration that allow for the construction and development of analytical categories and the interpretation of relationships among the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Yip & Zeng, 2025).

The relevance of this research lies, firstly, in presenting a longitudinal analysis of the government's tourism agenda and, secondly, in proposing an analytical framework for using official documents as empirical evidence for research focused on transforming government agendas, with potential applications in other areas of public policy. From this perspective, the article aims to contribute both to the substantive discussion on tourism policy and to the methodological debate on longitudinal document analysis in qualitative research.

METHODOLOGY

The research adopted a qualitative design of longitudinal document analysis. As previously mentioned, analytical procedures from Grounded Theory, following the approach of Corbin and Strauss (2015), were used, particularly initial coding, constant comparison, the creation of memos, and the integration of categories. This decision responds to the research problem, in that this theory is used to organize, compare, and interpret the changes observed in the documented agenda, and not to infer about the implementation processes, the relationships between actors, or the results of this tourism policy.

For this study, the documentary population consisted of federal national planning instruments and those related to the tourism sector between 2001 and 2024. From this, eight documents were identified: four NDP and four STP (Gobierno de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, 2001, 2007, 2013, 2019; Secretaría de Turismo, 2001, 2008, 2013, 2020). Laws, regulations, decrees, government reports, and public speeches were excluded because, although they are relevant sources of information, they do not present equivalent conditions of continuity and comparability for the selected periods.

The temporal delimitation was defined by the government periods beginning in 2001, during which tourism was included as a strategic sector for the economy and for promoting economic activity in the territories. The analysis was organized using a guide developed by the authors, called the Coding System for the Analysis of Government Tourism Agendas (CSAG-T). This system is not a theory or an independent method, but rather an operational guide for organizing the longitudinal document analysis and adapting coding and comparison procedures to a corpus of planning instruments. Table 1 shows the approach taken to achieve the overall objective of the research.

Table 1.
Methodological trajectory of the research

Phase	Actions	Analytical Product
I. Delimitation of the documentary corpus	Documentary selection of national and sectoral planning instruments (2001-2024)	Documentary Corpus 2001-2024
II. Open coding	Documentary analysis Conceptual identification	1488 coding occurrences
III. Comparison of identified codes	Comparison within each document, between the National Development Plan and the sectoral program of each administration, between equivalent documents, and over time	Record of continuities, changes in function, and variations in centrality
IV. Integration and articulation of categories	Comparison and categorical integration	Nine analytical categories; functional relationships and centrality variations
V. Longitudinal reconstruction	Integrated analysis of results	Three agenda configurations

Source: Own elaboration

As shown in the table, the system facilitated the identification of the aforementioned units of study and their subsequent coding based on selected text segments. Following this, a comparison of the codes was made within

each document and between documents from different periods. Finally, the codes were progressively grouped into analytical categories, and their relationships over time were examined.

The coding was performed on the entire corpus, where each document was reviewed in its entirety, and units of meaning expressed in titles, diagnoses, objectives, strategies, lines of action, programmatic sections, and formulations related to the role of the State in tourism were identified. The analysis recorded 1,488 coding occurrences¹. The identified coding occurrences were reviewed and compared iteratively, interweaving four levels: intradocumentary, between the NDP and STP of each period; interdocumentary, between equivalent instruments from different administrations; and longitudinal, across the period 2001–2024.

As mentioned previously, theoretical sampling in the classical sense of Grounded Theory was not applied. Therefore, the analytical closure was established after thoroughly reviewing the eight selected instruments and iteratively comparing the consistency of the codes and categories across the four document cycles. Analytical sufficiency was assessed by the ability to describe and compare, for each category, its properties, its presence in the documents, and its changes in function within the different planning cycles.

In Phase IV, nine analytical categories were constructed, corresponding to the level of abstraction used to compare the agendas across different periods. The construction of the categories is not equivalent to the identified codes, but rather corresponds to designations similar to the textual units (Table 2).

Table 2.
Analytical categories, operational definition, and correspondence with initial codes

Analytical categories	Operational definition
Competitiveness, markets, and positioning	A set of statements that conceive of tourism as a strategic economic activity and guide public action toward productivity, differentiation of offerings, international integration, promotion, and the positioning of destinations and businesses.
Business development, investment, and quality	It brings together the codes related to strengthening tourism businesses, attracting investment, financing, professionalization, innovation, service quality, and developing productive capacities.
Strategic planning, information, and evaluation	It includes the statements that establish instruments to guide, program, monitor, and evaluate tourism and government action. This includes long-term planning, indicators, goals, information systems, and performance monitoring and evaluation.
Governance, coordination, and participation	It groups codes related to the coordination among agencies, levels of government, economic sectors, communities, social organizations, and other actors involved in the formulation or implementation of tourism policy.
State leadership and institutional capacities	It integrates the codes that assign to the State functions of leadership, regulation, coordination, information production, provision of public goods, administrative modernization, and strengthening its capacities to guide tourism development.
Territorial development and regionalization	It brings together codes that conceive of territory, regions, and destinations as scales of public intervention. It includes regionalization, destination integration, development of host communities, regional balance, territorial infrastructure, and leveraging local strengths.
Sustainability and heritage protection	It groups together codes that link tourism development with environmental conservation, land-use planning, protection of natural and cultural heritage, resource management, and destination sustainability.
Well-being, inclusion, and rights	It comprises codes that connect tourism policy with reducing inequalities, accessibility, inclusion of priority groups, social tourism, the well-being of the population, capacity building, equal opportunities, and the guarantee of rights.
Innovation, knowledge, and public professionalization	It integrates codes that recognize research, information generation, human resource development, technological innovation, and institutional learning as capacities for transforming tourism management.

Source: own elaboration based on the coding book.

In Phase V, the comparison considered that a category persisted across periods based on three conditions: that the concept was explicitly present in the compared documents; that it maintained a similar function within the objectives, strategies, or programmatic instruments; and that it retained a recognizable relationship with other categories on the agenda.

The hierarchy among categories was not established through isolated frequency counts, but rather based on their position within the argumentative structure of the documents. The following were considered indicators of greater centrality: their presence in general objectives and guiding principles; their recurrence as a criterion that

¹This number corresponds to text segments coded during the literature review, not to unique concepts, isolated words, or independent categories

articulates other strategies; their placement in strategic sections; and their function as justification for instruments, actions, or sectoral priorities.

Finally, for the presentation of the results, historical groupings of the periods were created, based on the interpretation of the organization of the categories within the government agenda. The periodization used in the study was not defined based on government cycles, although six-year periods were retained as units of comparison, also taking into account the period of issuance of the analyzed documents. The final grouping into three configurations was carried out using the criteria of the category that occupied the greatest centrality in the objectives, guiding principles, and diagnoses; the categories that fulfilled articulating functions within the programmatic structure; and the predominant criterion of legitimizing public intervention in tourism.

Finally, it should be mentioned that, in order to strengthen the traceability of the study, a codebook was created with the information associated with the documentary analysis carried out, and it is available and can be made available to interested parties by emailing the corresponding author of the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The longitudinal reconfiguration of government tourism agendas

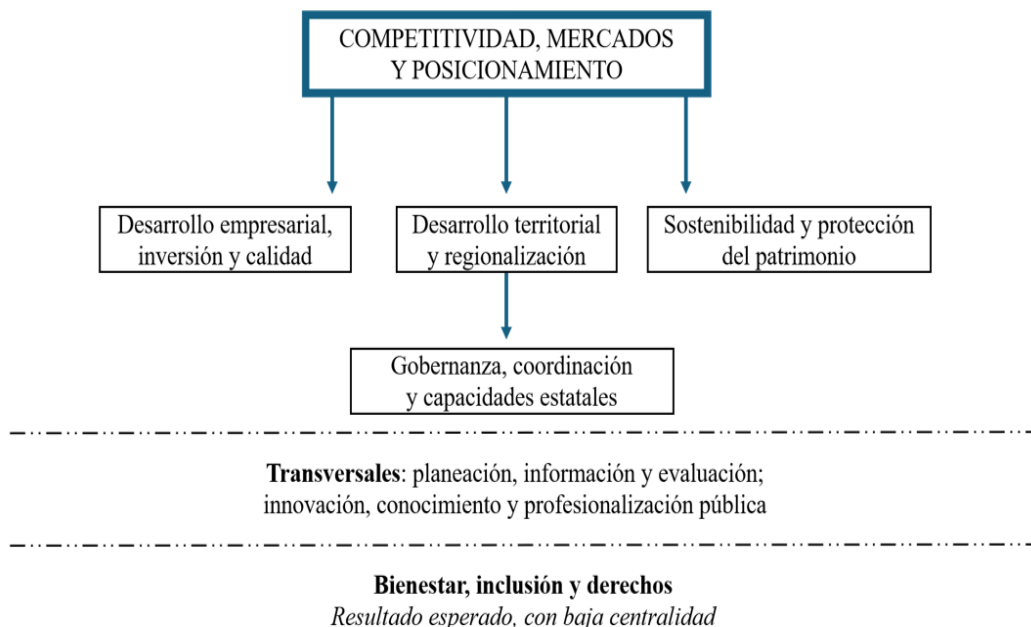
As already mentioned, the longitudinal comparison was initially carried out between the four documentary cycles that make up the corpus: 2001-2006, 2007-2012, 2013-2018 and 2019-2024. Subsequently, and once the centrality, function and relationships of the nine analytical categories were contrasted, three agenda configurations were established, where the grouping of 2007-2012 and 2013-2018 does not respond to an administrative continuity, but to the persistence of the same intervention architecture: competitiveness maintains strategic relevance, but is associated with governance, intergovernmental coordination, state leadership, planning, evaluation and territorial management.

2001 – 2006: Competitiveness as the organizing rationale of the tourism agenda

The first configuration identified in the corpus shows that during this period the federal tourism agenda was structured and defined around competitiveness as the organizing principle of public intervention (Figure 1).

Figure 1.

Hierarchical structure of Configuration I (2001–2006)²



Source: own elaboration.

Note: the figure appears in its original language.

²The boxes represent the nine analytical categories defined in Table 2. Their placement reflects a qualitative hierarchy identified by the presence of each category in the general objectives, guiding principles, strategic sections, and functional relationships within the analyzed documents. The categories located in the lower section operate transversally within the corresponding configuration.

This does not mean that the policy did not include categories such as sustainability, regional development, or intergovernmental coordination; rather, all of these appear subordinated to a logic that defined the success of these policies based on the country's ability to improve its position in the various source markets.

The very design of the TSP allows us to observe this hierarchy, since although the document is presented through four guiding principles (national priority tourism, fully satisfied tourists, sustainable destinations, and competitive companies), the comparison between objectives, strategies, and memorandum shows that these principles do not act as autonomous dimensions, but as convergent components of the same competitive rationale.

In the case of the content of this document, it was found that the diagnosis stems from concerns about Mexico's declining market share in international tourism markets, the territorial concentration of supply, dependence on the U.S. market, the drop in average spending, the weakness of information systems, and insufficient product diversification. Based on this, the public agenda is not primarily focused on correcting territorial inequalities or expanding social rights, but rather on rebuilding the competitive capacity of Mexican tourism in the face of an increasingly demanding global environment.

The coding carried out corroborated the above assertion: the analysis includes categories such as competitiveness as a guiding principle, value-based competitiveness, comprehensive strengthening of the supply, and business competitiveness. The documents show that competitiveness is treated as a politically constructed capacity built through information, planning, quality, innovation, and promotion, and not as a natural advantage derived from the heritage and resources of the destination country.

It is important to note that the program posits that Mexican tourism can only sustain its growth if it modernizes its SMEs, professionalizes its human resources, and improves the marketing of its offerings. Thus, the tourism company emerges as a key unit in managing the activity.

Sustainability is also present at the beginning of this century, but it appears with a secondary function: to strengthen the competitive viability of the policy in the medium term. The program's content acknowledges that environmental degradation, uncontrolled urban growth, loss of cultural identity, and a lack of comprehensive planning affect the position of destinations in the global market. Therefore, it can be stated that sustainable development is not included within the tourism policy of this period as an independent axis of territorial justice or social redistribution.

Something similar occurs with regional development, as it grants importance to states and municipalities, promotes regional programs, fosters territorial technical assistance, and recognizes the need to strengthen local capacities. However, this is done within a framework where territory is valued primarily for its potential to diversify offerings, integrate products, specialize segments, and build more competitive regional brands. Thus, regional development does not displace competitiveness; on the contrary, it operates as one of its main scales of application.

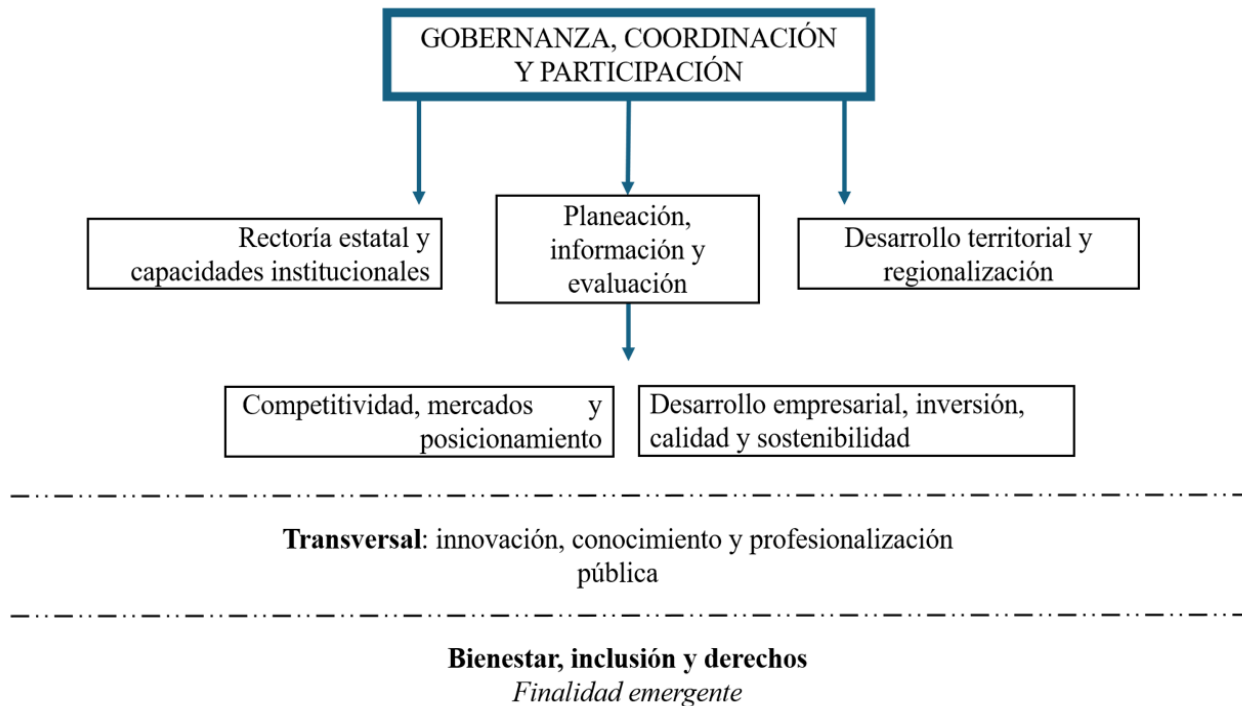
Another distinctive element of this configuration is that the State's response to international competition is formulated through strategic planning instruments. The production of statistics, the territorialization of the Satellite Account, performance measurement, regulatory improvement, institutional modernization, and intersectoral coordination demonstrate that the program conceives of competitiveness as a public task that requires state capacity, reliable information, and permanent intervention mechanisms. At this point, the 2001-2006 agenda anticipates several categories that will be further developed in subsequent periods, especially those related to evaluation, coordination, regulation, and institutional strengthening.

Therefore, the first configuration identified can be read as the moment when the federal tourism agenda is articulated more clearly under a competitive rationale that orders the diagnosis, justifies state intervention, and defines the value criteria with which the development of the sector is evaluated.

2007 – 2018: Institutionalization of governance and expansion of state capacities

A second timeframe encompasses the period from 2007 to 2018, which reflects a reorganization of the agenda characterized by the progressive institutionalization of certain governance mechanisms and the expansion of state capacities to guide the sector's development. Competitiveness retains a strategic position but ceases to function as the sole principle shaping tourism policy (Figure 2). During this period, its achievement becomes increasingly explicitly linked to intergovernmental coordination, strategic planning, territorial management, the use of information, evaluation, and the participation of public, private, and social actors.

Figure 2.
Hierarchical configuration structure II (2007–2018)



Source: own elaboration.

Note: the figure appears in its original language.

It is important to highlight that this configuration encompasses two federal administrations not due to a chronological coincidence, but rather due to the continuity of the same intervention rationale. Although the documents from 2007-2012 and 2013-2018 present differences in language, emphasis, and programmatic scope, both share the idea that tourism problems cannot be solved solely through promotion, investment, or business strengthening. In both cases, the sector's performance depends on the State's capacity to coordinate competencies, resources, territorial scales, and public policy instruments.

The analysis suggests that during this period, competitiveness began to be redefined as an outcome requiring more complex institutional conditions, such as coordination among levels of government, programmatic alignment, regulatory strengthening, information availability, results evaluation, and differentiated destination management.

From a critical perspective, it can be noted that the State ceased to be presented primarily as a facilitator of tourism activity and more clearly assumed a coordinating role. Therefore, public intervention is geared towards coordinating the efforts of federal agencies, state and municipal governments, decentralized bodies, businesses, academic institutions, and social organizations. Tourism policy is thus conceived as an intersectoral field, whose effectiveness depends on reducing institutional fragmentation and building agreements that allow for coordinated intervention in destinations and regions.

Governance, consequently, acquires a structural position within the agenda. In the previous configuration, interinstitutional coordination was already present, but it was primarily formulated as a tool to improve administrative efficiency, facilitate program implementation, or strengthen business competitiveness. Between 2007 and 2018, however, coordination came to be recognized as a prerequisite for tourism policy itself. Collaboration among the three levels of government, public-private partnerships, agreements with communities, and intersectoral coordination ceased to be complementary mechanisms and became necessary components for managing destinations.

Strategic planning also shifted its position within the agenda. While in the previous period it was linked to the need to improve competitiveness and respond to a dynamic international environment, in recent years its function has expanded through the incorporation of mechanisms for programming, monitoring, evaluation, strategic information, and results-based management. The reviewed documents show a growing concern for linking national objectives with sectoral instruments, intergovernmental actions, and strategies applicable in tourist destinations.

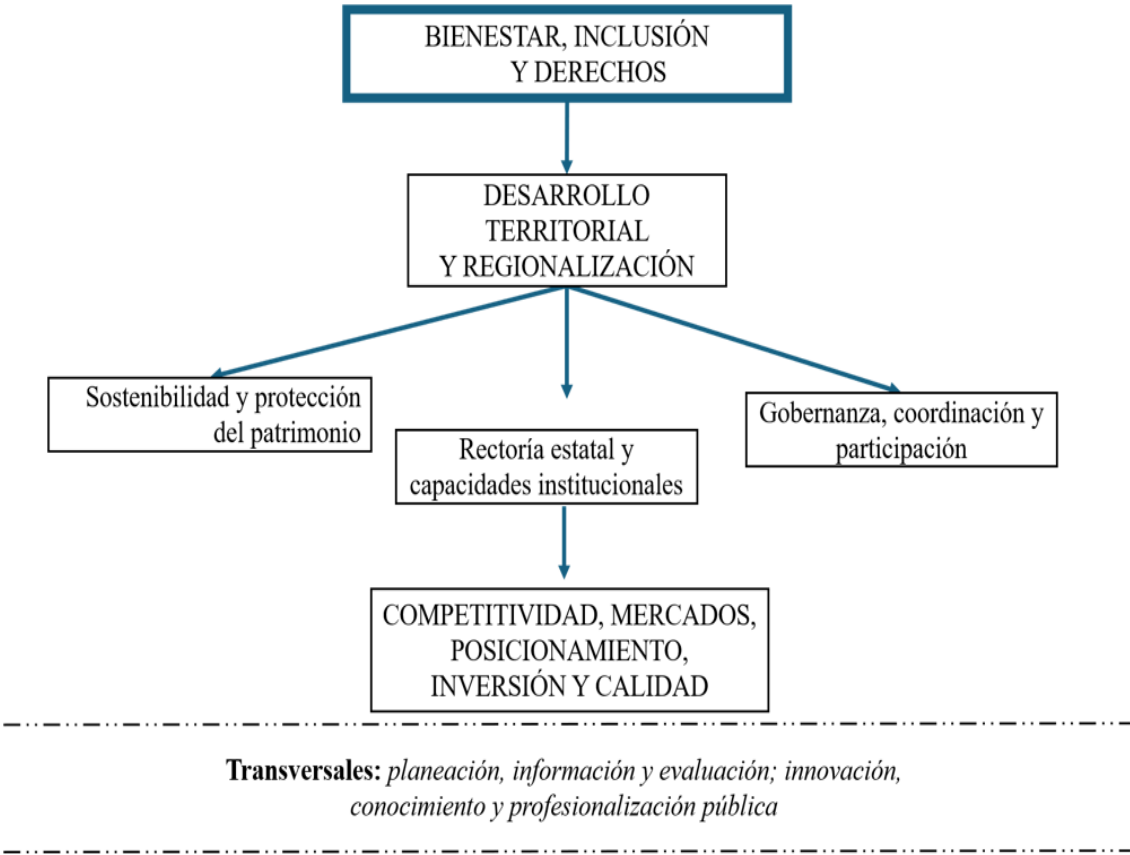
Territorial development also occupies a more prominent position in this configuration. While in the previous stage territory was primarily a scale for diversifying products and leveraging tourism resources, between 2007 and 2018 it began to consolidate as a space for coordinating policies, stakeholders, and investments. The agenda more clearly incorporates the need to address regional imbalances, strengthen destinations, improve infrastructure, manage tourism growth, and leverage local capacities. However, territory is still predominantly interpreted as a support for increasing competitiveness and expanding the economic benefits of tourism, rather than as an autonomous axis for social redistribution.

From a longitudinal perspective, the main transformation in this configuration is not the isolated emergence of new categories, but rather the change in the functional relationships between existing categories. Competitiveness, sustainability, territorial development, coordination, participation, information, and planning were present in the previous period, but between 2007 and 2018 they were integrated into a more complex framework. Competitiveness remains a strategic goal, although it now depends on an institutional network that includes multi-level governance, state leadership, intersectoral coordination, evaluation, innovation, and territorial management.

2019 – 2024: Well-being, inclusion and territorial development as a new rationale for the agenda

The 2019-2024 framework reflects a shift in the priorities of federal tourism policy. Competitiveness, promotion, and market diversification remain, but they no longer single-handedly shape the agenda. The 2020-2024 Tourism Strategic Plan (TSP) prioritizes a social approach, respect for human rights, balanced destination development, and sustainability (Figure 3). Tourism is presented as a relevant economic activity, although its legitimacy is now linked to its capacity to generate well-being and reduce inequalities.

Figure 3.
Hierarchical structure of Configuration III (2019–2024)



Source: own elaboration.
Note: the figure appears in its original language.

This shift stems from a critical analysis of the previous tourism development model. The program identifies a persistent concentration of infrastructure, services, and visitors in a few destinations, especially sun and beach resorts. According to the document, this concentration coexisted with marginalization and an unequal distribution

of economic benefits in communities near the main tourist centers. Based on this analysis, the policy proposes expanding attention to regions and localities that had received less investment or less presence in national promotion strategies.

Well-being occupies a different place than in previous documents, as it no longer appears solely as an expected effect of job creation, investment, or growth in the sector. It is incorporated as a criterion to guide public action. The program links tourism to improving the living conditions of those who live and work in the destinations, strengthening local economies, and a broader distribution of the benefits derived from the activity.

Inclusion also acquires a more defined presence. The Sectoral Program explicitly includes people living in marginalized situations, people with disabilities, older adults, children, youth, and Indigenous and Afro-Mexican communities. This focus is related to the idea that tourism should be accessible to sectors that have historically had fewer opportunities to travel, relax, or participate in the sector's benefits. Thus, social tourism ceases to be a secondary component and becomes linked to the right to rest, recreation, and enjoyment of national heritage.

Strategies aimed at the domestic market reflect this shift. The document proposes facilitating access to recreational and leisure travel through support programs, agreements with service providers, and lower-cost packages. These actions seek to expand domestic demand, but also aim to reduce the economic barriers that exclude a significant portion of the population from tourism consumption. The domestic market retains its economic importance, while also acquiring a social function.

Territorial development is being redefined in terms of regional balance. In previous programs, territory appeared primarily as a space for diversifying products, improving the competitiveness of destinations, or coordinating interventions between levels of government. During 2019-2024, territory is linked to the need to reduce gaps between regions and to incorporate localities that have not fully benefited from tourism. Attention is focused on creating circuits, routes, and products that connect established destinations with areas of lesser tourism development.

This orientation does not imply that all territories will be treated the same. The program recognizes that regions possess different resources, capacities, problems, and trajectories. Hence the importance given to tourism regionalization, the integration of local value chains, and the utilization of cultural, natural, and biocultural heritage. The policy aims for tourism activity to contribute to revitalizing local economies and generating opportunities in territories with high levels of underdevelopment.

Sustainability also occupies a broader position. It is no longer limited to the conservation of resources necessary to maintain the competitiveness of destinations. The program links it to heritage protection, land-use planning, respect for communities, environmental conservation, and responsibility to future generations. Problems of waste, water, mobility, environmental degradation, and pressure on land reserves are presented as issues that affect both the viability of tourism and the well-being of the resident population.

The State's role becomes crucial in this context. The document argues that tourism policy must correct imbalances and orient the activity toward objectives of social justice and regional development. This requires coordination with federal agencies, state and municipal governments, private actors, communities, and social organizations. However, coordination is no longer justified solely on the grounds of administrative efficiency. It is presented as a condition for directing resources, infrastructure, and programs toward regions and groups that have been excluded from the main benefits of tourism.

Competitiveness remains on the agenda. The program maintains objectives related to market diversification, strengthening international promotion, improving services, training, investment, and professionalization. The difference is that these actions are now linked to broader social and territorial goals. Market diversification, for example, is associated with the possibility of generating greater economic benefits for destinations and communities; training is linked to strengthening local service providers; and sustainability is linked to protecting living conditions in tourist areas.

It can be said that this configuration retains elements from previous stages, especially those related to planning, coordination, sustainability, and strengthening institutional capacities. What changes is their place within the agenda. Growth and competitiveness are no longer presented as sufficient outcomes but are now linked to objectives of well-being, inclusion, and territorial balance.

Summary of results

Based on the foregoing, it is confirmed that the Mexican government's tourism agenda has changed during the years under analysis. The categories presented and their hierarchies at different points in time coincide with recent work that has challenged tourism policy analyses focused exclusively on isolated instruments or general recommendations. An example of this is the observation made by Aguinis et al. (2023): research on tourism and hospitality still pays limited attention to policy evolution, institutional complexity, and the relationship between instruments, actors, and time. From this perspective, longitudinal analysis reveals that a single category can remain on the agenda, even though its meaning and function may change between periods.

This broader perspective is consistent with the literature on tourism governance. Recent studies argue that the sustainability and resilience of destinations require arrangements capable of coordinating levels of government, economic sectors, communities, and social organizations. They also warn that public-private partnerships alone may prove insufficient when they concentrate decision-making within a narrow institutional framework or when they fail to incorporate community and environmental interests (Álvarez, 2025; Kimaro & Saarinen, 2026; Mugarura et al., 2026).

The findings allow us to qualify, however, that expanding state capacities does not necessarily equate to more intensive direct government action across all areas. During the 2007–2018 period, the state strengthened primarily as a coordinator, planner, regulator, information producer, and resource coordinator. This form of intervention is compatible with what recent literature identifies as hybrid policies: combinations of regulatory, economic, informational, and collaborative instruments among actors (Aguinis et al., 2023; Sarhan et al., 2025; Sarican, 2025).

Furthermore, the 2019–2024 configuration reveals an additional shift. Competitiveness, international promotion, investment, and market diversification remain part of the sector's agenda, but they are now linked to objectives of well-being, human rights, inclusion, and balanced destination development. The 2020-2024 Tourism Strategic Plan (TSP) explicitly formulates a social approach, proposing to strengthen accessible tourism and aiming to distribute benefits to historically excluded communities, regions, and groups. This shift aligns with recent international debates on inclusive and sustainable tourism. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2024) has indicated that governments have a significant role to play in guiding tourism development toward a broader distribution of its benefits, accessibility, quality employment, climate action, and coordination across levels of government. The focus of this literature is not to pit growth and inclusion against each other as incompatible objectives, but rather to examine under what institutional arrangements growth can generate more balanced social, territorial, and environmental outcomes.

Documentary evidence suggests that, in the Mexican federal agenda, well-being and inclusion have shifted from being expected outcomes of tourism growth to functioning as explicit criteria for programmatic guidance. This finding should be interpreted with caution: the analysis identifies changes in the diagnoses, objectives, and strategies formalized by the federal government, but it does not demonstrate that the redistribution of benefits, the inclusion of priority groups, or territorial balance have actually occurred. This distinction is important because recent literature warns that the existence of sustainable and inclusive objectives does not guarantee their translation into measures, implementation capacities, or observable results.

Therefore, the analysis has a specific scope. It allows for the reconstruction of the priorities formalized in planning documents and an examination of how they relate over time. It does not evaluate program implementation, budget allocation, effective inter-agency coordination, the response of state and municipal governments, or the effects of tourism on employment, poverty, well-being, or environmental conservation. Future research could complement these results through budget analysis, interviews with policymakers, case studies in destinations, and the evaluation of territorial indicators.

CONCLUSIONS

The study conducted allowed for an understanding of the evolution of the tourism agenda in Mexico from 2001 to 2024, based on eight national planning instruments. The analysis showed that the changes observed during this period cannot be understood as a replacement of priorities within each administration. Rather, the documentary evidence identifies a process of gradual reorganization in which the categories present throughout the period maintained continuity, although not with the same hierarchy.

Within this framework, it was possible to distinguish three agenda configurations. The first, corresponding to 2001-2006, was primarily organized around competitiveness as the guiding principle of tourism policy. The second, in the years 2007-2018, maintained this orientation but more strongly incorporated elements such as governance, strategic planning, intergovernmental coordination, and the strengthening of state capacities. The third period, between 2019 and 2024, reshaped the agenda by prioritizing well-being, social inclusion, and territorial development, without eliminating concerns and actions related to competitiveness, markets, or promotion.

The results suggest that government priorities do not emerge from scratch with each program, nor are they completely replaced between six-year presidential terms. What changes is the position of certain categories within the agenda, the type of relationships they establish with each other, and the general criteria used to justify state intervention. Viewed in this way, the tourism agenda exhibits both important continuities and significant changes.

This work also offers a methodological contribution. The combination of longitudinal document analysis, open coding, constant comparison, and category construction allowed for the examination of planning instruments not only as isolated pieces but also as part of a medium-term trajectory. This made it possible to observe shifts, continuities, and rearticulations that would be difficult to identify through analyses focused on a single program or a single government term. In this sense, the study shows the usefulness of systematic qualitative analysis to reconstruct the evolution of public agendas formalized in official documents.

It is also important to recognize that the findings refer to the government agenda as formulated in federal planning instruments. Therefore, the analysis does not, on its own, allow us to conclude that the identified priorities have directly translated into budgetary decisions, effective governance arrangements, implementation outcomes, or concrete transformations in tourist destinations. Nor does it directly incorporate the perspectives of subnational actors, service providers, host communities, or other participants in the implementation of tourism policy.

These limitations open several avenues for further research. One involves comparing the formal agenda with implementation processes in specific destinations to examine the extent to which the priorities stated by the federal government have been translated into concrete actions, investments, or institutional arrangements. Another possible approach is to incorporate interviews, budget analysis, and territorial case studies to track the relationship between policy formulation, implementation, and effects. It would also be pertinent to explore whether this type of longitudinal reconfiguration of agendas can be observed in other public policy sectors or in other national contexts.

Taken together, the results suggest that the study of tourism policy gains depth when it shifts from the isolated description of programs to the analysis of the relationships that shape the agenda over time. In the Mexican case, this approach made it possible to identify not only which themes appear in the documents, but also how their centrality, function, and articulation change at different times. This reconstruction provides a more solid foundation for discussing the recent trajectory of federal tourism policy and for opening new avenues of research into its forms of continuity and change.

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AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION

Conceptualization: Yoan Hernández Flores, Verenice Sánchez Castillo, Libardo Ramón Polanía.

Data curation: Yoan Hernández Flores, Verenice Sánchez Castillo.

Formal analysis: Yoan Hernández Flores, Verenice Sánchez Castillo, Libardo Ramón Polanía.

Research: Yoan Hernández Flores, Verenice Sánchez Castillo, Libardo Ramón Polanía.

Methodology: Yoan Hernández Flores, Verenice Sánchez Castillo.

Validation: Yoan Hernández Flores, Verenice Sánchez Castillo, Libardo Ramón Polanía.

Writing – original draft: Yoan Hernández Flores, Verenice Sánchez Castillo, Libardo Ramón Polanía.

Writing – proofreading and editing: Yoan Hernández Flores, Verenice Sánchez Castillo, Libardo Ramón Polanía.