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# Bridging the researcher-stakeholder gap in leisure and tourism: a framework for enhancing the impact of scoping reviews

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## ABSTRACT

Scoping reviews are instrumental for synthesizing evidence and mapping research landscapes, but effective stakeholder engagement is also essential to ensure their relevance to both practice and policy. Despite its importance, stakeholder engagement in leisure and tourism scoping reviews has been limited. This methodological paper presents the Co-Creation Scoping Review Framework (CSRF) to enhance collaborative knowledge creation. By expanding the traditional five-stage scoping review process to seven stages, the CSRF places a strong emphasis on stakeholder engagement, effectively bridging the divide between researchers and stakeholders. This framework enhances the relevance of scoping reviews for both academic and practical applications, promoting more inclusive research methods, improving knowledge mobilization, and guiding future practice and research. The paper provides detailed guidance on implementing the CSRF, including a step-by-step approach and examples from recent leisure and tourism scoping reviews, demonstrating how the CSRF could have been applied to engage stakeholders and increase the relevance of findings.

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## KEYWORDS

Scoping review; co-creation; stakeholder engagement; researcher-stakeholder gap; knowledge transfer

## Introduction

Within the last decade, there have been calls within both critical leisure studies and critical tourism studies for academics to begin driving innovation, transformative change and social justice through conducting their research *with* rather than *on* stakeholders such as local communities, businesses, not-for-profit organizations, policy-makers, service/programme providers and other industry practitioners (see for example Cockburn-Wooten et al. (2018); Theriault and Mowatt (2024); Higgins-Desbiolles and Whyte (2013); Duxbury et al. (2022); Rose et al. (2018); Ruhanen and Cooper (2018)). The role of knowledge exchange, transfer and mobilization in this process cannot be

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understated; knowledge can be used in a practical sense by both academics and stakeholders to advance innovation, transformation and social justice outcomes (Ruhanen & Cooper, 2018).

There remains a deeply ingrained assumption amongst some academics that the knowledge to be “transferred” is solely generated and held within academia. Certainly, academic research is largely inaccessible to stakeholders for multiple reasons. First, many publications are locked behind paywalls in academic journals. Second, the writing style of academic papers can be challenging for non-specialists to comprehend (Cockburn-Wootten et al., 2018; Hardy et al., 2018). Added to this, academic research often lags behind industry interests (Cao et al., 2022). Finally, the current “publish or perish” culture, driven by university appointment and promotion processes, pressures academics to prioritize rapid publication over effective researcher-stakeholder knowledge transfer (Hardy et al., 2018), a process that requires time to build trust, nurture collaboration, and achieve meaningful impact.

However, academics are not the sole repositories of legitimate knowledge. Some scholars, such as Rastegar and Ruhanen (2023, p. 997, emphasis added) have argued that “knowledge ... has more value when it is *created* and shared amongst stakeholders”. Top-down knowledge transfer approaches often privilege knowledge generators (in this case, academics) over knowledge users, i.e. stakeholders such as industry practitioners, service providers, local communities, businesses, and not-for-profit organizations. These approaches centre on “scientific” knowledge while overlooking the legitimacy of local and/or practical knowledge held by non-academic stakeholders, creating an imbalance that represents an injustice and undermines the effective sharing of knowledge (Cockburn-Wootten et al., 2018; Higgins-Desbiolles & Whyte, 2013; Rastegar & Ruhanen, 2023; Rose et al., 2018).

This situation has given rise to what is commonly referred to as the “researcher-practitioner divide” or “researcher-stakeholder gap” (among other similar terms) (Duxbury et al., 2022). For the purposes of this paper, we consider this gap as a disconnect in how we work *with* stakeholders to understand their needs and challenges, and then: (a) identify relevant academic knowledge to support their efforts in addressing these challenges; (b) translate that academic knowledge into an accessible form; (c) recognize, value, and uncover existing knowledge held by (non-academic) stakeholders regarding these challenges; and (d) co-create new knowledge that is useful to stakeholders and aligned with their needs.

One way to bridge this gap between academic and stakeholder knowledge is through the use of scoping reviews, yet their potential value in this regard is largely overlooked. Scoping reviews can facilitate a co-created approach to knowledge exchange, transfer and mobilization between academics and stakeholders. As their name suggests, scoping reviews are invaluable for determining the scope and coverage of a body of knowledge, offering a comprehensive assessment of the volume and nature of available studies (Arksey & O’Malley, 2005; Levac et al., 2010; Munn et al., 2018). Unlike systematic literature reviews, scoping reviews may integrate both academic knowledge and knowledge held by non-academic stakeholders, such as that found within grey literature and stakeholder accounts of lived experience (Leeson et al., 2024; Peters et al., 2021).

Scoping reviews, therefore, hold significant potential to create value for researchers and stakeholders alike. For researchers, these reviews provide insights into non-academic

perspectives on topics, including current realities of issues for stakeholders that may not have yet attracted scholarly attention. For stakeholders, scoping reviews that synthesize academic and grey literature can offer valuable information about how similar problems have been addressed in other contexts or jurisdictions (Duxbury et al., 2022; Hardy et al., 2018; Ruhanen & Cooper, 2018). While other approaches like systematic reviews or meta-analyses can also engage stakeholders, scoping reviews are particularly well-suited for this purpose due to their flexibility and broader scope (Munn et al., 2018; Peters et al., 2020).

A critical factor in maximizing the value of scoping reviews is presenting information in an easily understandable format. When researchers actively involve stakeholders in the scoping review process, benefits such as enhanced dissemination of findings (Pollock et al., 2022) and greater relevance and uptake of the results (Peters et al., 2020) are achieved. However, two main barriers prevent the full realization of this potential: limited consideration of how to involve and report on stakeholder engagement (Tricco et al., 2016), and inadequate guidance on how to synthesize evidence across all stages of the review process (Pollock et al., 2022).

Recent studies advocate for the early and continuous engagement of stakeholders *throughout* a scoping review, including during conceptualization, development, execution, and dissemination (Pollock et al., 2022). However, challenges associated with such comprehensive stakeholder engagement, including extended timeframes and additional resourcing requirements, suggest the need for a more practical, balanced approach that maximizes stakeholder input while remaining feasible within academic constraints.

In this methodological paper, therefore, we present the Co-Creation Scoping Review Framework (CSRF) that extends the work of Arksey and O'Malley (2005) and incorporates recommendations by Levac et al. (2010). This pragmatic tool is designed to foster stronger engagement between (leisure and tourism) researchers and stakeholders in two key ways: first, by integrating stakeholders' insights into scoping review findings, and second, by giving them a voice in shaping how this knowledge is applied to meet their needs. By prioritizing their involvement within the CSRF, we address the current lack of guidance on stakeholder engagement in scoping reviews, as highlighted by Pollock et al. (2022). The framework also responds to calls for improved knowledge mobilization, enhancing the practical value of scoping reviews for stakeholders. Moreover, the CSRF provides a unique opportunity to build mutually respectful relationships between researchers and stakeholders who share common goals. Ultimately, through our proposed framework, we aim to help bridge the gap between academic research and industry practice, fostering more effective collaboration and knowledge transfer in the leisure and tourism sector.

## Scoping reviews as a research method

Scoping reviews are a distinct type of evidence synthesis. While they share some similarities with systematic reviews, there are key differences between the two. Systematic reviews are more appropriate for addressing specific, well-defined research questions and providing detailed insights at a micro level (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). They assess the quality of evidence and often follow a "prescriptive/restrictive definition of

what constitutes knowledge” (Long & Hylton, 2014, p. 381). In contrast, scoping reviews are exploratory in nature, with a broader “scope” and more expansive inclusion criteria. They offer greater flexibility by encompassing a wide range of evidence types (Munn et al., 2018; Peters et al., 2020).

Unlike systematic reviews, scoping reviews do not seek to answer a narrowly defined question in a particular discipline area (such as “what are the impacts of increased tourist numbers on local residents’ everyday mobility?”). Instead, they seek to map a broader area of study, especially where it may have been investigated using various methods or across a range of disciplines (for example, “what is known about people’s everyday mobility?”) (Arksey & O’Malley, 2005; Levac et al., 2010; Tricco et al., 2018). The aims of a scoping review may include: (a) understanding the extent (size), range (variety), and nature (characteristics) of studies on a given topic or question; (b) assessing whether a systematic literature review is warranted; (c) synthesizing and disseminating research findings; or (d) ascertaining where the gaps in knowledge lie to guide future research and shape the research agenda (Arksey & O’Malley, 2005; Peters et al., 2020; Tricco et al., 2018). We argue the last two objectives, in particular, lend themselves to engaging with stakeholders in knowledge exchange, transfer and mobilization, offering the greatest potential for transformative change and social justice outcomes.

Despite its broader remit, the scoping review methodology is no less rigorous: it is merely different. Indeed, Peters et al. (2020) stress that scoping reviews, like all types of evidence synthesis, must be systematic and adhere to methodological guidelines to ensure rigour, reproducibility, and transparency. The first methodological guide for scoping reviews was introduced by Arksey and O’Malley (2005), and has five distinct stages: (1) identifying the research question; (2) identifying relevant studies; (3) selecting studies; (4) charting the data; (5) collating, summarizing and reporting the results, with an optional sixth stage of consultation with stakeholders. Although Arksey and O’Malley (2005) acknowledged the potential value of stakeholder consultation in enhancing scoping reviews, they did not formally incorporate it into their five-stage framework. Subsequent scholars, notably Levac et al. (2010), advocated for the integration of stakeholder consultation as an integral component of the process, emphasizing its importance in enhancing the methodological rigour and practical relevance of scoping reviews. Building on these works, the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) published a guidance document for conducting scoping reviews (Peters et al., 2015), which has since been updated multiple times.

Importantly for this paper, Pollock et al. (2022) advocate for a co-creation approach to scoping reviews rather than mere consultation. In this approach, researchers work closely with stakeholders who may lead the research and shape the agenda. While this approach demands additional time, resources, and effort for relationship-building and meaningful engagement, the benefits significantly outweigh these costs. By moving beyond tokenistic consultation, often marked by power imbalances and one-way interactions, to a more in-depth co-creation or co-production model, researchers can ensure that scoping reviews address pertinent questions, incorporate diverse perspectives, and integrate valuable insights. This approach results in findings that are both theoretically sound and practically relevant, with translation and dissemination efforts tailored to stakeholders’ needs (Pollock et al., 2022).

Despite the availability of guidelines for *conducting* scoping reviews, there was still a need for guidance on *reporting* these reviews. To address this gap and enhance the

methodological rigour and reporting quality of scoping reviews, Tricco et al. (2018) introduced PRISMA-ScR, adapting the well-established PRISMA methodology, originally designed for systematic literature reviews, for use in scoping reviews. However, Pollock et al. (2022) noted that PRISMA-ScR does not fully address how to report stakeholder engagement. In response, they offered recommendations in their guidance paper for more effectively incorporating stakeholders into scoping reviews (Pollock et al., 2022), and here we seek to build on their work to enhance the applicability of scoping reviews for researchers and practitioners within leisure and tourism.

## Scoping reviews in leisure and tourism research

The scoping review methodology has been refined within health disciplines (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Levac et al., 2010; Tricco et al., 2018). Within the last few years, however, many scoping reviews have been carried out in the field of leisure and the allied field of tourism. Recent scoping reviews in leisure have largely focused on health-related contexts. For example, studies have explored the role of leisure in fostering cognition in ageing individuals (Wenzel et al., 2024), supporting older adults in adjusting to new living environments (Prentice et al., 2022), assisting adults with traumatic or acquired brain injury (Leeson et al., 2024; Trevorror et al., 2024), improving the quality of life among caregivers (Davy et al., 2022), and supporting adults living with cancer (Shallwani et al., 2021). Scoping reviews have also been employed to investigate the function of leisure in occupational therapy (Carvalho Cirele et al., 2024) and equitable access to nature-based settings for individuals with disabilities (Groulx et al., 2022).

In tourism research, scoping reviews have explored a range of topics, including the integration of popular culture tourism in local communities (Lerfald, 2024; Lundberg et al., 2024), wellness tourism (Majeed & Gon Kim, 2023), animal ethics in tourism (Fennell et al., 2024), sustainable tourism indicators (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2023; Shallwani et al., 2021), the role of second homes on rural development (Lerfald, 2024), tourist travel intentions before and during the pandemic (Seyfi et al., 2024), wilderness visitor use management (Thomsen et al., 2023), marine tourism (Spinelli & Benevolo, 2022), and digital innovation within museums (Tham et al., 2023).

Our analysis of these scoping reviews within leisure and tourism found that many lacked sufficient transparency in their methods and disregarded stakeholder engagement and its reporting. Despite many having potential for knowledge mobilization and transformative change, with numerous studies noting “implications for practitioners” and “future research directions” in their conclusions, stakeholder engagement remains infrequent in the scoping review process. Therefore, we argue that particularly where a scoping review is carried out with a view to inform practice or guide future directions, stakeholder engagement could add significant value. This issue is not confined to leisure and tourism and is also prevalent across other disciplines (Pollock et al., 2022).

## The co-creation scoping review framework

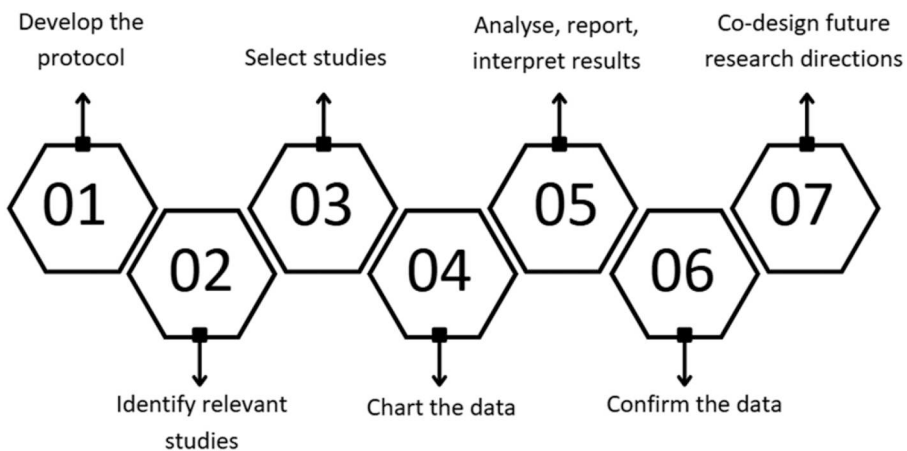
Unlike Arksey and O'Malley's framework (2005), where stakeholder consultation is optional, the CSRf aligns with Levac et al.'s recommendation (2010) by positioning stakeholder engagement as a core component of scoping reviews. Expanding on the original

five-stage framework (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005), the CSRF incorporates two dedicated stages of stakeholder engagement in the latter part of the review process (*Stages 6 and 7*). These stages ensure that findings are not only accurate but also actionable and tailored to stakeholder needs. While these stages establish a baseline for stakeholder involvement, we also provide detailed guidelines in this paper for researchers with sufficient resources to engage stakeholders meaningfully from the project's outset.

Figure 1 presents a visual representation of the seven stages of the CSRF, each explored in detail below with specific considerations for stakeholder engagement at each stage. Accompanying each stage is a boxed section titled "Focus on leisure and tourism", which presents an analysis of the leisure and tourism scoping reviews cited in the introduction. This analysis highlights the variability in how scoping reviews have been conducted and reported, identifying areas where readers (and peer reviewers) should expect greater clarity.

### Stage 1: Develop the scoping review protocol

Stage 1 of the CSRF emphasizes the importance of developing an a priori protocol to guide the search strategies when conceptualizing the research question (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). This is essential as it helps clearly define the objectives and question, specify the inclusion/exclusion criteria, and outline how data will be extracted and presented (Peters et al., 2020). It is recommended to incorporate the Population, Concept, and Context (PCC) approach when formulating the scoping review research question and developing inclusion criteria (Munn et al., 2018; Peters et al., 2020). Depending on the review's objectives and question, it may be necessary to specify important characteristics of the *Population/Participants*, such as age, gender, and other relevant factors. The main *Concept/s* of the review should be clearly defined, which might include phenomena of interest or outcomes, while the *Context* could involve geographic location or specifics of the setting. The PRISMA-ScR checklist (Tricco et al., 2018) requires disclosing whether such a protocol exists when reporting the review results, along with details on how to access it (e.g. providing a URL if available).



**Figure 1.** The co-creation scoping review framework. Source: Authors.

The a priori protocol should also incorporate a comprehensive stakeholder engagement strategy that outlines the purpose and extent of engagement, criteria for stakeholder selection, and methods for engagement at each stage. This strategy must include plans for stakeholder training that foster two-way knowledge exchange, balancing methodological guidance with opportunities to collect stakeholder insights.

In defining the purpose and extent of stakeholder engagement, researchers must consider available resources as well as the research objectives and question (Pollock et al., 2022). For example, during Stage 1, researchers and relevant stakeholders would work together to shape and refine the parameters of a scoping review. Involving stakeholders from the outset helps them understand the importance of developing a search strategy and its impact on the findings. By collectively refining key terms and contributing to the development of search strategies and inclusion criteria, stakeholders can ensure the research questions are aligned with their needs (Pollock et al., 2022).

Stakeholder selection should be guided by criteria such as relevant expertise, interest in the topic, and capacity to support study's objectives, which may be influenced by stakeholders' roles or existing relationships with the research team or other stakeholders. Once potential stakeholders are identified, researchers can initiate relationship-building efforts and begin implementing their engagement strategy.

Engagement methods may vary throughout the review process and across different stakeholder groups (Pollock et al., 2022). For instance, in the early stages focused on defining the research scope, informal discussions can help capture diverse viewpoints, while roundtables or advisory panels may be more suitable for gathering broader input from multiple stakeholder groups.

#### *Focus on leisure and tourism: Stage 1*

The majority of the leisure and tourism scoping review studies gave no clear indication of whether an a priori protocol was employed. Exceptions include studies by Carvalho Cirele et al. (2024); Lundberg et al. (2024); Lorfald (2024); Shallwani et al. (2021); Prentice et al. (2022); Spinelli and Benevolo (2022); and Tham et al. (2023). However, the details of these protocols, as well as access to them, were often incomplete or entirely absent, and the use of the terms "scoping review" and "protocol" was sometimes loosely applied to refer to PRISMA guidelines. Moreover, only a few studies, such as those by Carvalho Cirele et al. (2024) and Shallwani et al. (2021), have implemented the PCC approach.

## **Stage 2: Identify relevant studies**

Scoping reviews are valued for their comprehensiveness, yet practical constraints such as time, funding, and resource availability necessitate balancing feasibility with breadth and depth. Researchers must manage these trade-offs to ensure that decisions made for the sake of feasibility do not compromise the study's capacity to address the research question (Levac et al., 2010). A comprehensive search strategy should include both published and unpublished sources or grey literature, with any limitations clearly outlined and justified. Boolean operators can effectively combine keywords related to the Population, Concept, and Context, enhancing the comprehensiveness and precision of the search across various information sources (Christou et al., 2024), with search strings adjusted to align with the syntax rules of specific databases or journals. An iterative search process may be employed, where researchers refine keywords, sources, and search



terms as they gain familiarity with the body of available evidence (Christou et al., 2024; Peters et al., 2020).

When reporting scoping reviews, it is essential to provide clear and detailed documentation of the search strategy. The PRISMA-ScR checklist (Tricco et al., 2018) emphasizes the need for a transparent articulation and justification of eligibility criteria, specifying the years considered, language, and publication status. Listing all information sources used in the review, such as databases, social media platforms, and websites, along with their coverage dates and the date of the most recent search, enhances transparency and fosters confidence in the evidence-gathering process. To further support reproducibility, researchers should include the full electronic search strategy for at least one database, detailing any limits applied (Tricco et al., 2018).

Stakeholder engagement can significantly enhance this stage by helping to identify relevant studies, particularly through access to unpublished reports from non-government organizations, industry, and other sources. This collaboration expands the reach and coverage of the review, ensuring it aligns with stakeholder needs by incorporating a broader scope of evidence that may otherwise be overlooked.

*Focus on leisure and tourism: Stage 2*

Among the leisure and tourism scoping reviews cited in this paper, a few studies, such as those by Rasoolimanesh et al. (2023) and Spinelli and Benevolo (2022), excluded grey literature, potentially limiting the comprehensiveness of their reviews. Others provided detailed accounts of their search strategies, although the level of detail varied (Y. Cao & Matsuoka, 2024; Carvalho Cirele et al., 2024; Lurfald, 2024; Tham et al., 2023; Thomsen et al., 2023). Notably, several studies reported engaging expertise from librarians when developing search strategies (Groulx et al., 2022; Leeson et al., 2024; Lurfald, 2024; Wenzel et al., 2024). Following recommendations by Tricco et al. (2018), one study pilot-tested their search strategy by conducting an initial search in a single electronic database, which helped refine their approach (Shallwani et al. (2021).

### **Stage 3: Select studies**

In Stage 3, the search strategy developed in Stage 2 is applied. The process starts with screening the titles and abstracts of the search results based on the inclusion criteria, followed by retrieving and assessing the full text of potentially relevant studies (Christou et al., 2024; Peters et al., 2020). While Arksey and O'Malley (2005) suggest using a single reviewer to manage the time-consuming process of study selection, other scholars recommend involving at least two reviewers to address uncertainties and ensure consistency in applying the criteria (Levac et al., 2010; Peters et al., 2020). Reviewers may independently assess titles/abstracts and convene at the beginning, midpoint, and end of the review process to discuss any issues and refine the search strategy as needed, ensuring the selection of relevant abstracts. For the subsequent review of full-text articles, it is advisable for two reviewers to evaluate each article independently (Levac et al., 2010).

Stage 3 should be reported with both a narrative description and a flow chart. The narrative should provide details on the total number of sources screened, assessed for eligibility, and ultimately included, along with reasons for exclusions. It should also describe the development of the selection form used to guide the process, including the criteria and software employed, as well as any pilot testing conducted by the review team and adjustments made following the testing. This will help ensure consistency and

accuracy throughout the process. Finally, the narrative should detail the review process itself, addressing how inconsistencies or disagreements were resolved (Levac et al., 2010; Peters et al., 2020; Tricco et al., 2018).

*Focus on leisure and tourism: Stage 3*

Several leisure and tourism scoping reviews cited in this paper failed to provide both a narrative description and a flow chart of their study selection process (Fennell et al., 2024; Lundberg et al., 2024; Thomsen et al., 2023). Furthermore, only a few studies (Shallwani et al., 2021; Wenzel et al., 2024) reported the involvement of a research team when screening and selecting studies. Among these, only Shallwani et al. (2021) offered a detailed account of their approach to pilot testing the search strategy and a description of the two rounds of independent screening – title/abstract and full text – conducted by two reviewers.

#### **Stage 4: Chart the data (data extraction)**

This stage involves extracting data from the selected studies in alignment with the review objectives and research question. To ensure transparency and rigour, the PRISMA-ScR checklist highlights the importance of clearly explaining methodological decisions and their rationale (Tricco et al., 2018). Data should be systematically charted, with two reviewers recommended to minimize errors and bias (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Levac et al., 2010; Peters et al., 2020). Collaboratively developing a purpose-built data-charting form, identifying key variables for extraction, and testing it on a few studies will help ensure comprehensive data capture (Peters et al., 2020). Furthermore, the form may need to be iteratively refined as new insights emerge, ensuring sufficient data is extracted to answer the research question (Levac et al., 2010).

In both Stage 3 and Stage 4, stakeholders can make valuable contributions to the screening, selection, and extraction of studies when provided with appropriate training and support. This engagement not only helps stakeholders become familiar with the existing evidence base but also fosters a mutually respectful relationship through regular communication. Such collaboration is essential for bridging the researcher-stakeholder divide (Cockburn-Wooten et al., 2018; Duxbury et al., 2022).

*Focus on leisure and tourism: Stage 4*

Inconsistent application of recommendations in this stage was evident in the leisure and tourism scoping reviews. While most studies described their data charting process, a few provided no details (e.g. Fennell et al., 2024; Lundberg et al., 2024). Some studies described the collaborative development of a data charting form by the research team (e.g. Tham et al., 2023), while in other cases, one researcher created the form in consultation with the research team, who then completed the data charting process (Davy et al., 2022; Trevorrow et al., 2024). A few studies followed recommendations by Peters et al. (2020), incorporating pilot testing and coding, with draft data charting forms independently tested by two reviewers before being finalized (Shallwani et al., 2021; Thomsen et al., 2023).

#### **Stage 5: Analyse, report, and interpret the results**

The fifth stage involves three interconnected steps: analysis, reporting, and interpretation. The *data analysis* method should align with the review objectives and be conducted in a transparent and explicit manner, with a clear rationale provided (Peters et al., 2020). Data analysis typically includes both numerical summaries and thematic analysis (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Levac et al., 2010; Peters et al., 2020). Scoping

reviews generally employ basic descriptive techniques, such as frequency counts (Levac et al., 2010). Simple coding or thematic approaches, often supported by specialized software, can be applied to identify key concepts or characteristics.

When *reporting results*, the aim is to provide an overview of key concepts and themes, with the information tailored to relevant stakeholder groups (Tricco et al., 2018). The charted data should be summarized and presented in a format that aligns with the review objectives and question, such as diagrams, tables, and figures, or a descriptive narrative (Peters et al., 2020; Tricco et al., 2018). Data from each of the selected studies should be included; however, if the volume of studies is large, this can be provided in a supplementary file (Tricco et al., 2018).

In this stage, stakeholders and researchers work together to review the results, ensuring that the findings are presented clearly and in a way that addresses stakeholder needs. Stakeholders can also offer input on effective methods for presenting the findings and assist in refining the interpretation of the results. Their feedback ensures that the implications drawn from the data are both meaningful and relevant (Pollock et al., 2022). This collaborative process helps position the *interpretation of the results* for Stage 6.

#### *Focus on leisure and tourism: Stage 5*

Many leisure and tourism scoping reviews include both descriptive numerical analyses presented through graphs and diagrams, as well as themes and concepts derived from their selected studies. However, the transparency of the analytical process, particularly regarding the derivation of themes and concepts, varies considerably across studies. For instance, Prentice et al. (2022), Rasoolimanesh et al. (2023), and Thomsen et al. (2023) provide a clear account of their coding processes, detailing how they identified themes and concepts from the selected studies using proven methodologies. Others, however, such as Davy et al. (2022), Majeed and Gon Kim (2023) and Lundberg et al. (2024), offer no information on how they derived their themes, merely presenting the findings. This lack of transparency limits the ability to assess the rigour of their analytic process, and consequently, the reliability of the findings.

The majority of these reviews include discussions on the implications and future research directions based on their results, reflecting the field's commitment to synthesizing existing knowledge while identifying gaps and opportunities for advancing both scholarship and practice. However, as explored in the following sections, there is considerable potential to enhance the relevance and applicability of these implications and future research directions through stakeholder engagement.

### **Stage 6: Confirm the data with stakeholders**

The main goal of Stage 6 is to share and discuss the preliminary findings from Stage 5 with stakeholders, including those already involved throughout the scoping review, as well as others who have a vested interest. This stage provides an opportunity for stakeholders to validate or challenge the findings, offer new insights or information sources, and identify previously unexplored or overlooked knowledge and/or practice gaps (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Daudt et al., 2013; Levac et al., 2010; Pollock et al., 2022). It is essential to consider the knowledge transfer mechanism, ensuring that findings are presented in plain language, possibly through a framework, set of themes, or list, to promote more effective stakeholder engagement (Levac et al., 2010). This approach allows stakeholders to contribute deeper insights and expertise, enriching the research process for both stakeholders and researchers.

The primary output from Stage 6 is a report that documents and analyzes stakeholder feedback, including newly identified information sources, challenges to the preliminary findings, and previously overlooked knowledge-practice gaps. Researchers should integrate this feedback into their initial findings, leading to a more comprehensive

understanding of the field. This iterative approach aligns with the principles of collaborative and participatory research (Duxbury et al., 2022), enhancing the relevance and applicability of the scoping review.

### **Stage 7: Co-design future research directions with stakeholders**

While Stage 6 focuses on validating findings, Stage 7 builds on this by enhancing the relevance and impact of scoping review results through continued stakeholder engagement. The goal of Stage 7 is to identify emerging priorities, inform future research directions, and foster potential partnerships among stakeholders to create ongoing value (Levac et al., 2010; Peters et al., 2021).

Stakeholders in this stage may include both previous participants and new individuals or groups with expertise relevant to addressing identified knowledge-practice gaps. When introducing new stakeholders, formal introductions help establish their credibility, roles, and expected contributions. To facilitate productive discussions, researchers should share the Stage 6 report and specific discussion questions with stakeholders in advance. It is important to clarify how stakeholder input will be incorporated, use structured approaches such as priority-setting workshops when consensus is needed, and provide necessary support to ensure meaningful and inclusive participation (Pollock et al., 2022). Stakeholders can also play a key role in creating evidence summaries and developing communication strategies across various platforms, including social media and professional networks. They can advocate for the broad dissemination of findings to diverse audiences, such as community organizations, government bodies, industry partners, and other relevant decision-makers (Pollock et al., 2022). This comprehensive dissemination approach ensures that the findings reach and potentially influence a wide range of sectors and stakeholders who can benefit from or act upon the research outcomes.

#### *Focus on leisure and tourism: Stages 6 and 7*

Among the leisure and tourism scoping reviews discussed here, only a few incorporated stakeholder engagement throughout the process. Some, such as Groulx et al. (2022) and Majeed and Gon Kim (2023), engaged stakeholders in the early stages but did not re-engage them in subsequent stages. In contrast, Cockburn-Wootten et al. (2018) and Trevorrow et al. (2024) consulted a content expert with lived experience to review their findings, which subsequently informed their future research recommendations. However, Pollock et al. (2022) recommend seeking a diversity of perspectives rather than relying on a single voice.

There were multiple studies where we believe including Stages 6 and 7 of the CSRF could have benefitted the scoping review applicability, and we highlight two such examples. In the first, Davy et al. (2022) identify a knowledge gap around understanding the parenting experiences of fathers. Engaging fathers as a stakeholder group (or caregivers more broadly, given the subject of the scoping review), along with those providing professional support services for caregivers of autistic children, would have allowed the researchers to assess whether this gap was genuine or if there were information sources that they had overlooked. In the second example, Lundberg et al. (2024) sought to understand how popular culture tourism could benefit local communities. In their conclusion, they note the need to “learn how to bridge divisions among stakeholders ... and create synergies necessary for the sustainable growth of popular culture tourism” (p. 16). The scoping review had the potential to address this by incorporating stakeholder engagement throughout the process, an opportunity that remained untapped. For example, input from local/national government, destination managers, marketers, film/tourism businesses, and local residents could have provided valuable insights into their understandings and perceptions of popular culture tourism, identified differences between stakeholder groups, and offered solutions for overcoming these divisions.

When documenting Stages 6 and 7, CSRF users should maintain the same level of methodological rigour as in previous stages. Documentation should clearly and transparently outline who the stakeholders are, their areas of expertise and interests, the methods of

engagement used, and the rationale for these choices. This systematic approach ensures a clear audit trail that illustrates how stakeholders have contributed to and influenced the review process, as well as how their knowledge has been integrated and valued.

## Ethical stakeholder engagement

Ethical stakeholder engagement involves establishing ongoing, reciprocal relationships where all parties contribute expertise while sharing responsibilities and benefits. Successful engagement relies on carefully balancing power dynamics, defining clear roles, and ensuring transparency throughout the process. By embedding these principles in the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages, researchers can foster meaningful and inclusive collaboration (Cockburn-Wootten et al., 2018; Pollock et al., 2022; Rastegar & Ruhanen, 2023; Ren et al., 2021). In practice, creating a safe and accessible space for engagement is essential in reducing power imbalances. For example, holding sessions in community halls rather than university settings can make the process feel more inclusive and less intimidating for many. Providing ample food and drink during these sessions can facilitate relationship-building and encourage informal conversations that support collaboration (Cockburn-Wootten et al., 2018; Rastegar & Ruhanen, 2023).

Early discussions should establish clear guidelines for how stakeholder contributions will be recognized. An engagement plan should formalize stakeholder recognition from the outset, covering aspects such as authorship and compensation arrangements (Pollock et al., 2022). This may include financial compensation, reimbursement of expenses, acknowledgment in publications, and, when appropriate, co-authorship using the CRediT framework (Contributor Role Taxonomy [CRediT], 2025). To ensure sustained, meaningful engagement throughout the process, researchers should employ a combination of broad and readily accessible communication methods, such as infographics and lay reports, alongside more personalized approaches like targeted email updates or hand-delivered invitations to participate (Antonova, 2016; Cockburn-Wootten et al., 2018; Walters et al., 2015).

## Conclusion

In response to calls for greater stakeholder involvement in scoping reviews (Pollock et al., 2022), we present the Co-creation Scoping Review Framework (CSRf). This framework bridges the researcher-stakeholder divide by integrating stakeholder knowledge throughout the review process, resulting in findings that inform both practice and policy (Christou et al., 2024).

The value of stakeholder engagement in scoping reviews is significant. By fostering meaningful collaboration, it enhances the relevance and applicability of findings while building lasting relationships between researchers and stakeholders who share common goals (Peters et al., 2020; Pollock et al., 2022). This collaborative approach goes beyond traditional “practical implications” or “future research directions” statements, as stakeholder input actively shapes outcomes through engagement at every stage of the process.

However, implementing comprehensive stakeholder involvement presents notable challenges. Relationship-building often requires years of sustained effort (Christou et al., 2024; Pollock et al., 2022). Involving stakeholders throughout the entire

review process – from conceptualization to development, execution, and dissemination – adds complexity, particularly as varying levels of stakeholder expertise may necessitate additional support and guidance. These factors can significantly impact project time-frames and budget considerations (Pollock et al., 2022).

The CSRF offers a pragmatic solution to these resource-intensive demands by focusing on two distinct engagement stages toward the end of the review process. This approach establishes a baseline for meaningful engagement while maintaining flexibility. For researchers with greater resources, we also provide guidelines for engaging stakeholders from the outset, ensuring a more comprehensive involvement throughout the review. Regardless of the approach adopted, both options follow the same rigorous processes and reporting principles, promoting transparency and ensuring that stakeholder contributions meaningfully shape the scoping review findings.

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