

ADAPTIVE CO-MANAGEMENT AS AN INNOVATIVE GOVERNANCE APPROACH FOR NATURE-BASED TOURISM DESTINATIONS

BASIC RESEARCH QUESTION

How does adaptive co-management (ACM) approach facilitate nature-based tourism destination governance particularly in protected areas of a developing country?

KEY PAPER(S)

Armitage, D., Marschke, M., & Plummer, R. (2008). Adaptive co-management and the paradox of learning. *Global Environmental Change*, 18(1), 86-98.

Plummer, R., & Fennell, D. (2009). Managing protected areas for sustainable tourism: Prospects for adaptive co-management. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 17(2), 149-168.

Plummer, R., Crona, B., Armitage, D., Olsson, P., Tengö, M., & Yudina, O. (2012). Adaptive comanagement: A systematic review and analysis. *Ecology and Society*, 17(3), 1-11.

MOTIVATION/ PUZZLE

Effective governance is considered to be one of the crucial features in ensuring the sustainable development and management of tourism in protected areas (Plummer & Fennell, 2009). It is claimed that effective governance may facilitate participation of diverse stakeholders in different levels of tourism interventions through various forms of coordination, collaboration, and cooperation that are efficient, transparent and subject to accountability (de Foulcoy, 2015). Governance is still a relatively new concept in tourism (Lai, Hsu, & Wearing, 2016). One approach that has been suggested as a governance model for the management of protected areas for sustainable tourism is the ACM approach (Plummer & Fennell, 2009), however the application of this approach is still in conceptual level.

THREE CORE ASPECTS OF ANY EMPIRICAL RESEARCH PROJECT

THE IDEA

There are different types of governance approaches for the management of protected areas like traditional top-down, participatory bottom-up, community-based, corporate approach. This study focuses on participatory bottom-up approaches more specifically ACM as a governance approach in protected area-based tourism destination governance. ACM is an adaptive, flexible and inclusive governance approach which has been successfully adopted for the management of natural resources (Armitage, Berkes, & Doubleday, 2007; Olsson, Folke, & Berkes, 2004) but still new in assessing its potential in tourism destination governance process. Five dimensions/principles of ACM are used in this research to explore the applicability of ACM approach in protected area-based tourism governance. These principles are: participation, accountability and transparency, rule of law, power and social learning.

THE DATA

This is a qualitative, exploratory and embedded single-case study carried out in two popular tourist destinations of Bangladesh - Lawachara National Park and Sundarbans East Wildlife Sanctuary as ACM approach is applied there. The sample size of the study was 45 (30 local community residents and 15 officials). Face-to face, semi-structured interviews were used to collect cross-sectional primary data from May to August 2015. The average duration of the interviews was 50 mins. Each of the individual interview participants is treated as the unit of analysis. All interviews were transcribed by the researcher. A few local research assistants helped the researcher to select and locate the representative participants. UQ Business School supported the data collection costs as a part of the PhD student research fund.

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THE TOOLS

Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted with various stakeholders. An expert sampling technique was used to select the respondents based on "experts' judgment" i.e., specific, knowledgeable persons having demonstrable experience in ACM and tourism activities. A typical seven phase qualitative data analysis procedure adopted from Marshall and Rossman (2011) guided the researcher in the data analysis. NVivo 11 Windows was used as the analytical software. The internal validity of the research findings were ensured by following pattern matching, explanation building of the case study data using "why" and "how" questions, addressing rival/opposing explanations and presenting various logics to conclude any finding.

TWO KEY QUESTIONS

WHAT'S NEW

The discussions about the application of ACM as a governance approach in nature-based tourism destination are still relatively conceptual. This research contributes an empirical perspective to the application of ACM as a governance approach by investigating how ACM can be applied to a protected area in a developing country.

SO WHAT

The research findings will generate the potential of an ACM application in nature-based tourism destination in the context of a developing country where governance is the main challenge for the development of protected areas as well as the overall development of the country. The findings will add some empirical evidence in this regard that may be applied in other protected areas to improve the governance systems and enhance the development of these destinations that is also expected to improve the performance of complex social-ecological systems of these destinations.

ONE BOTTOM LINE

THE CONTRIBUTION

The application of ACM as a governance approach in nature-based tourism destination particularly in the context of protected areas of developing countries.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Target journal: *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* (A*). Ethics clearance: Ethical clearance was approved by UQ Business School. Qualitative data analysis is a challenge. Academic writing for A* journal is also a challenge for me but my Advisers are assisting me in this regard.