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A critical analysis of sustainable destination governance from environmental perspective

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Introduction

Over the last few decades, the tourism industry has faced an enormous growth across the globe impacting specific locations (Hatipoglu, Alvarez, & Ertuna, 2016). This unexpected growth is often linked to and called as overtourism that underscore the consequences resulting from the global mobility and the necessity of discovering of new locations, as well as improved access to more established unpopular destinations as alternative (Cheer, Milano, & Novelli, 2019). One of the basic reasons behind the emergence of this issue is rapid urbanisation (Lalicic, 2019) that derived from the globalisation process and negative impacts of mass tourism practices (Milano, Novelli, & Cheer, 2019) that engender pollutions due to hosting a huge amount of tourists at destinations leading to environmental devastations by threatening sustainability (Singh, 2018). This fact underscores negative and positive impacts discussion of tourism referring to three pillars (e.g., economic, natural, and socio-cultural) (Mihalić, Šegota, Knežević Cvelbar, & Kuščer, 2016).

As a result, more attention has been drawn by scholars on developing solutions in response to such emerging societal problems, which entail moving visitors from hotspots destinations to silent locations as priority of destination planners and managers (Jacobsen, Iversen, & Hem, 2019) or rural areas as alternative places to be consumed (Eckert, Zacher, Pechlaner, Namberger, & Schmude, 2019). This creates the presence of ethical dilemmas that enhance untouched landscapes to be consumed whereas possible distortions of natural environments may arise. To this end, today tourists as contemporary consumers quest for and thus tend to travel to destinations by which they are intrigued that can only visited by few visitors (Zerva, 2018). This kind of tourism which accentuates sustainable forms of tourism are often called as eco-tourism (Spenceley, 2008) or responsible tourism (Hall, 2012). The management of such places are problematic which entails decision-making concerning principles, laws, policies, rules, and management of tourism and visitor referring to governance (Leung, Spenceley, Hvenegaard, & Buckley, 2018) to provide sustainability of touristic landscapes as well as achieve desired
objectives in ecotourism destinations. Based on a critical approach, the objective of the current book chapter is to elicit present gap on the sustainable governance that relates to ecotourism and environmental policy whereas presenting recommendations for future research studies.

**Literature review**

**Sustainability and tourism governance**

Tourism is an activity that is marketed through environment to be consumed by visitors or tourists and, therefore, the environment is treated as a key resource, and as a result its protection and management are crucial both for the future of the tourism industry and the society from a holistic perspective (Dimitriou, 2017). Recently, more attention has been directed to the endorsement of sustainability principles in ensuring tourism development, which gained broader attention and thus has occupied a significant space in the agenda of scholars, governments, and industry practitioners (Cornelisse, 2019). In a similar manner, the term has been acknowledged as an integral part of tourism policymaking process by both the public and private actors at all levels of governance (Hall, 2011b).

To provide destinations’ sustainability and achieving desired objectives, there are many preconditions such as knowledge, thought, the application of power, resources, and rules including coordination, cooperation, collaboration, and partnerships as being drivers of governance to form necessary policies to be realized them for tourism in destinations (Bramwell, 2011; Graci, 2013; Mihalić et al., 2016). It is, therefore, sustainable governance depends on the presence of numerous parameters through which public, private actors, and community stakeholders can ensure sustainability of tourism destinations or touristic landscapes (World Tourism Organization and Griffith University, 2017).

On one hand, effective governance is treated as an integral part to building and sustaining as a serving environment, necessary to the accomplishment of social and economic objectives for any country (Ndivo & Okech, 2020). It is also regarded as an essential tool to reach objectives of sustainable tourism as the participatory action of a wide variety of different tourism actors in decision-making process can increase both democratic processes and ownership (Bramwell & Lane, 2011). On the other hand, the presence of good governance is addressed as another essential prior requirement for sustainable tourism (Nunkoo, 2017) which refers to some vital criteria through which local actors can govern local policies in an effective way (Beaumont & Dredge, 2010).

So far, the concept of governance has been dealt with by scholars from a wide variety of perspectives as a form of public-private initiative through which main tourism actors can intentionally act in terms of reaching common goals (Dredge & Whitford, 2011). In the extant literature on the typology of tourism governance and modes of governance there are numerous research each of which provides the position of each actors, use of power, and distribution of authority in different manner (Kagermeier, Anzial, & Elfasskaoui, 2019; Richins, 2011). For instance, in their research, Wan and Bramwell (2015) proposed a hybrid mode of governance governance that encapsulates both state control and public-private partnerships whereas Hall (2011a) established typology of governance which split into four main areas: hierarchies, markets, networks, and communities. Hierarchies refers to state-led governance approach, whilst markets addresses the power of private economic actors and their associations. On the other hand, networks reflect partnerships that is ensured by public-private partnerships and associations while communities signals governance that is based on the local level with direct public involvement (Boluk, Cavaliere, & Higgins-Desbiolles, 2019).
All of these approaches have in common in terms of spatial application which are limited to urban areas while overlooking as how to manage and conservation in sustaining tourism in environmental or protected areas through governance. However, typology of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is considered as one of the most salient ones in terms of governance for protected areas proposing four types of governance typology that relies upon management approaches by taking degree to which dissemination of power into account of each type of typology (Leung et al., 2018):

- **Type A—Governance by government**: This type of governance is often conducted by Federal or national ministry/agency, sub-national ministry or agency in charge at several different levels (e.g., regional, provincial, municipal), Government-delegated management (e.g., NGO);
- **Type B—Shared governance**: This kind of governance usually refers to transboundary governance which may entail formal or informal arrangements among two or more than two countries; collaborative governance (in which more than actors closely work together to reach particular results or outcomes) and joint governance which works through a pluralist board or other multi-party governing body.
- **Type C—Private governance**: This typology is mostly preferred for conserved areas established that are implemented by landowners, non-profit organizations (e.g., NGO, universities) and for-profit organizations (e.g., corporate landowners);
- **Type D—Governance by Indigenous peoples and local communities**: In this typology, Indigenous peoples’ conserved areas and landscapes are established and operated by Indigenous peoples; community-conserved territories are established and managed by local communities.

On the other hand, Dredge and Jamal (2013) offered ‘soft’ and ‘hard governance’ as typology of governance modes each these reflect differences in use. The mode of soft governance approach emphasises the role of market and production systems that omit state control to form tourism development whilst hard governance involves rule-dependent and hierarchical approach which imposes an authoritative order and control mechanisms which enable vertical and horizontal integration of policy and regulation.

**Governance in ecotourism and protected areas**

The concept of ecotourism, for which there is no commonly held single definition, is concerned with as sub-genre of sustainable tourism (Chiutsi, Mukoroverwa, Karigambe, & Mudzengi, 2011) and is considered as being one of the new forms of tourism that is among others terms to be easily defined (Wang, Cater, & Low, 2016). From this perspective, Fennell (2001) has identified 85 definitions of the term *ecotourism* derived from the analysis of his research. Ecotourism was improved by means of the twofold energetics of both the enhancement of the environmental movement and the integration of the concept of sustainable development (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2011). It is treated as a concept resulting from a globalisation process that is closely related to environmental governance (Duffy, 2006); it is fuelled by generalised principles regarding local livelihoods and conservation of not only natural resources but also cultural environments (Thompson, Gillen, & Friess, 2018). In its multidisciplinary nature, the concept has both supply and demand side perspectives each of which has many different sub-categories (Weaver & Lawton, 2007). On the other hand, tourism plays regarded as a vital in the way non-governmental organisations govern landscapes, particularly in decentralised conservation...
contexts not only in developing countries (Pellis, Lamers, & Van der Duim, 2015) but also in urban protected areas for each of which the presence governance is received a greater attention (De Leon & Kim, 2017). In a similar manner, the presence of strong local governance systems addresses whole participation of all community members in decision-making processes concerning issues of local residents as well as community-based ecotourism governance (Farrelly, 2011) that is described as a mode of governance which consists of the interaction of rules, institutions, processes, and principles by which the stakeholders in this approach perform and fulfill decisions (Gan, Nair, & Hamzah, 2019). It is also worth noting that in the application of effective management of protected areas in ensuring sustainable of ecotourism the necessary policy and planning process can be accomplished by the presence of governance (Fennell & Dowling, 2003).

It is suggested by prior research that in a value chain structure there is an interrelation between tourism governance and sustainability of regional development areas (Adiyia, Stoffelen, Jennes, Vanneste, & Ahebwa, 2015). In their research, 18 good governance strategies were found by Pasape, Anderson, and Lindi (2015) that support sustainable ecotourism. In another study which was led by Palmer and Chuamuangphhan (2018) it was confirmed that within ecotourism context, governance has been established as possessing a crucial impact on the ways in which local participation in tourism is realised. These results derived from previous research confirm that the presence of good governance structure relies upon many different elements in providing sustainability of protected areas and in ecotourism, which entails the participation of diverse range of actors in decision-making such as government, private sector, and civil society (Nordlund, Kloiber, Carter, & Riedmiller, 2013; Saruman, Razman, Zakaria, & Ern, 2017). For instance, the element of cooperation between the stakeholders in embracing the norms of governance was assessed as a supporting tool in affecting the management in the protection and conservation of landscapes (Noh, Shuib, Tai, & Noh, 2018). Similarly, Zeppel (2012) highlighted the significance of collaborative governance by which destinations can achieve conservation objectives as well as preservation of natural areas may play a vital role in planning and policymaking processes at local levels.

On the other hand, in the existing relevant academic literature it is highlighted that there is a close relationship between good governance and adaptive co-management in ensuring sustainability of protected areas and ecotourism areas (Plummer & Fennell, 2009). Good governance is also defined as one of the seven facets of adaptive co-management (Fennell, Plummer, & Marschke, 2008). The adaptive co-management is also predicated on the participation of various actors representing stakeholder groups in decision-making processes and management of landscapes, as well as adaptive learning to increase the governance approach in order to protect and foster natural resources in ecological areas (Islam, Ruhanen, & Ritchie, 2018a). It refers to the social learning which come true by participatory action of stakeholders to achieve sustainable tourism in protected areas through good governance structure which entails primarily the presence of cooperation and coordination that based on interactions which provides the building of trust, the establishment of formal and informal rules and norms, the sharing of power, and joint decision-making (Islam, Ruhanen, & Ritchie, 2018b). Over the past decade, this newly emerging management approach has been the focal point of local stakeholders to attain desired goals towards sustainable ecotourism at local level by local actors that implies the inclusive governance approach by involving all actors which centreing social learning and adaptation in decision-making mechanism (Armitage, Marschke, & Plummer, 2008; Armitage, Berkes, Dale, Kocho-Schellenberg, & Patton, 2011; Islam et al., 2018a).
UNWTO Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and governance for sustainable tourism

The issue of sustainable development has been the intense focal topic of several different actors playing key a key role such as tourism policymakers and industry and destination marketing organisations including tourism researchers (Hall, 2019). The year 2015 has been a turning point for global development since governments have collectively acknowledged the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, together with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UNWTO, 2020). The year 2017 was declared a year of Sustainable Development by the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) to assemble the tourism industry and key actors to prioritise tourism as a tool to success SDGs (Dube, 2020). These SDGs are consisting of 17 goals and 169 targets each of which address diverse range of areas by considering the sustainability in all spheres of life (Dube & Nhamo, 2020; Laimer, 2017; UN, 2020), which calls for critical thinking on these areas to provide successfully transition process of tourism to sustainability (Boluk et al., 2019).

By referring to the SDG 8, SDG 12, and SDG 14, the tourism industry is considered in three of these goals through its huge amount of contribution to economic growth and creating jobs, sustainable production and consumption, and marine conservation (Perdomo, 2016). On the other hand, SDG 16 and SDG 17 are featured among remaining others as goals and targets of them are clearly refer to the necessary of presence of governance for sustainability of tourism. SDG 16, which refers to peace, justice, and strong institutions, entails the necessity of effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions, whereas SDG 17 reflects partnerships for the goals to be achieved by related actors that signals vital elements of governance to reach desired outcomes and objectives (Boluk, Cavaliere, & Higgins-Desbiolles, 2017). Goals and targets of SDG 17 are closely and directly related to governance for sustainable tourism (Siakwah, Musavengane, & Leonard, 2019) while the presence of SDG 16 partly reflects governance elements that stands as a supporting tool to foster SDG 17 towards sustainability through effective governance.

Methods

Review and selection of articles for analysis

The present chapter has adopted a qualitative systematic literature review as a method used. Keyword search terms were applied to collect data by using the terms of ‘ecotourism and governance’ (n = 9), ‘environmental governance’ (n = 7), ‘sustainable destination governance’ (n = 27), and ‘sustainable governance (n = 7) in SCOPUS that is most widely used and considered as being one of the internationally recognised databases for scholars in social sciences. These keywords terms were extracted and formed after extensive review of the relevant literature (Table 23.1).

Table 23.1 Data collection technique and process

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Keywords</th>
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<th>Results</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>Article title</td>
<td>31 documents</td>
<td>23-04-2020</td>
<td>SCOPUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Article title</td>
<td>11 documents</td>
<td>23-04-2020</td>
<td>SCOPUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Article title</td>
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<td>23-04-2020</td>
<td>SCOPUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘sustainable tourism governance’</td>
<td>Article title</td>
<td>9 documents</td>
<td>23-04-2020</td>
<td>SCOPUS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition, the review process has revealed peer-reviewed articles published by *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* (n = 25) and *Sustainability* journal (n = 6). These journals’ articles included as their topic were closely related to sustainable tourism and governance. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data which consists of many stages. During the data collection process, which was carried out on 23 April 2020, many inclusion and exclusion criteria were implemented (Papamitsiou & Economides, 2014). In this vein, only peer-reviewed articles were selected for analysis while books, book chapters, conference proceedings, research notes, and research letters were excluded. At the initial stage of data collection stage 62 articles were totally identified that were obtained from the database and finally data set was limited to 33 articles after collated items and eliminating duplicates based on the criteria presented. As a result, the data set was generated for analysis from 64 articles in total, including articles of special issues.

**Thematic analysis of selected articles**

A thematic analysis of the data has provided to identify limitations in the current evolution of the field as well as research gaps in the literature that were regarded as: 1) governance for sustainability in hotspots places and urban areas (e.g., over-tourism) has been overlooked and less emphasised; 2) there is limited study in the literature on the topic of governance relating to issue of degrowth from sustainability of tourism landscapes and; 3) there is a lack of research on the topics of SDGs and governance which relate those themes with sustainable management of protected and conversed areas and interrelated fields such as responsible tourism, ecotourism, wildlife tourism, etc.

Given the interdisciplinary nature of governance as a field of research and its multilayered scope, overall, thematic analysis has revealed that numerous researchers attempt to examine the sustainable tourism governance from a diverse range of topics such as ecotourism (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2011), environmental aspect (Erkuş-Oztürk & Eraydin, 2010), climate change (Jamal & Watt, 2011), wildlife (Moore and Rodger, 2010), surf tourism (Mach & Ponting, 2018), political economy (Bramwell, 2011), event tourism (Dredge & Whitford, 2011), mobilities (Dredge & Jamal, 2013), residents’ perception (Gajdošik, Gajdošiková, & Stražanová, 2018), smart bike-sharing (Chen & Zhu, 2020), and SDGs (Siakwah et al., 2019).

Spatial dimensions of governance from sustainable tourism insight in articles are varied; for instance, national (Getzner, Vik, Brendehaug, & Lane, 2014), regional (González-Morales, Álvarez-González, Sanfiel-Fumero, & Armas-Cruz, 2016), local (Chen & Lin, 2017), global (Duffy, 2006), and rural (Frost & Laing, 2015). From a methodological point of view, the number of research adopting qualitative research methods have been found as dominant (e.g., Bichler & Lösch, 2019; Noh et al., 2018) as compared to quantitative ones (e.g., Armas-Cruz, Sanfiel-Fumero, & González-Morales, 2017; Fernández-Tabales, Foronda-Robles, Galindo-Pérez-de-Azpilaga, & García-López, 2017). On the other hand, the proliferation of using a mixed methods approach was also prominently noted (e.g., Conceição, Dos Anjos, & Gadotti dos Anjos, 2019; Dinica, 2009); that is followed by conceptual chapter which remain lesser (Borges et al., 2014; Wray, 2015).

**Conclusion**

The aims of the current chapter were to identify current gaps on the sustainable governance that relates to ecotourism and environmental policy while presenting recommendations for future research studies by reviewing 64 articles. The critical review has identified that there is a huge gap on the topic of governance of ecotourism areas particularly related to governance of hotspots.
places referring to issue of overtourism that is essential to provide sustainability of environments that are supplied to be consumed by visitors.

Governance is concerned with the effort among different state actors to describe and promote the adoption of policies and planning mechanisms for sustainable tourism (Bianchi & de Man, 2020). This present book chapter has confirmed that governments are not counted any longer as the most important source of decision-making in managing and conservation of environments; rather, a different and wide variety of actors are also playing a crucial role in decision-making processes through established new mechanisms and forums (Armitage, De Loë, & Plummer, 2012). As such, an adaptive co-management approach may also be undertaken to overcome the weaknesses in governance issues in managing protected areas as well as ecotourism landscapes (Islam et al., 2018a). This management approach involves (social) learning that accentuates an integral part of sustainable destination governance of ecotourism environments (Islam et al., 2018b) and regarded as a normative goal in environmental science and resource management to provide protection and conservation of landscapes and thus has received the great attention it deserves (Armitage et al., 2008). In doing so, local stakeholders or actors perform collaborative actions and share the outcomes of their actions (Fennell et al., 2008). Further, adaptive co-management embeds the co-production of knowledge as a core element in the centre of a decision-making mechanism within an adaptive governance structure (Armitage et al., 2011) referring to a shifting paradigm that signals adaptive co-management encapsulating both collaborative and the effective learning feature of adaptive management (Plummer & Fennell, 2009). From this perspective, to provide sustainability in destinations, the participation of the local actors has been found as vital not only to form long-term strategies but also to form tourism planning (Graci, 2013) that address the needs for effective governance to provide environmental protection and conservation.

Although the agenda is closely affecting tourism policy, it directly underscores and thus mentions a few times tourism at first glance when teasing out the SGD 17 goals and 169 targets; it can be claimed that the role of tourism industry is significantly ascribed to achieve the UNWTO Sustainable Development by 2030 (Hall, 2019). UNWTO SDGs, especially goals of SDG 16 and SDG 17, play crucial roles to provide sustainability of tourism in urban and/or protected areas for which governance should be considered as a driving force for tourism to support the SDGs (Siakwah et al., 2019).

Given the interdisciplinary nature of the field and governance concept, the search process was limited to the SCOPUS database as it provides a broader content in social sciences and constitutes the chief limitation of the current chapter. Future research may attempt to investigate or discuss the possibility of presence in an ideal sustainable governance model within the context of UNWTO SDGs to effectively manage conservation of natural environment and protected areas.

References


Sustainable Destination Governance


