



Effective governance in tourism development – An analysis of local perception in the Huangshan mountain area



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ABSTRACT

Effective governance is important for sustainable tourism development, especially in China, where local tourists have sharply increased over the last 20 years. This study aimed to assess the two different governance systems, the community-based tourism (CBT) and Lease-Operation Tourism (LOT) currently implemented in the Jade and Phoenix Valley near the Huangshan Mountain World Heritage Site. We conducted household-level interviews and questionnaire surveys for all households living in these valleys and compared the outcomes of the different institutional arrangements through analysis of efficiency, equality, accountability and adaptability according to several evaluation indicators. The results indicated that CBT governance has considerable advantages compared to that of LOT because CBT has largely improved the local households' livelihoods and increased local awareness of the nature conservation. The findings clearly demonstrated that CBT can yield great economic, ecological and social benefits and therefore it is the most effective governance system in tourism development.

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1. Introduction

Over the last 20 years, China has experienced fast economic growth despite many countries in the world were in the opposite directions. Gross Domestic Products in China increase about 10% annually between 1995 and 2015, compared to 2.4% in the USA, 1.90% in EU, 0.4% in Japan (World Bank, 2016). Fast economic development has negative and positive impacts on the Chinese society. Sustained economic development growth has resulted in more Chinese being rich and their lifestyle has greatly improved over the past 20 years (China Statistical Yearbook, 2016). As lifestyle improved, people began to appreciate the nature. This is particularly true for China, where Chinese travelers have increased sharply about 10.5% inside the country and about 19.5% for overseas travel between 2013 and 2015 (China National Tourism Administration, 2016). The world heritage sites have been much more attractive for Chinese tourists (China Statistical Yearbook, 2015). Such increase of tourists has provided more opportunities for local people to generate additional incomes from tourism development. If governed effectively, tourism has been regarded as an ideal tool for sustainable development as it can contribute to both development and conservation of natural resources (Binns & Nel, 2002; Torres-Delgado & Palomeque,

2012). Previous studies suggest that governance has important role in sustainable development of tourism (Erkus-Ozturk & Eraydin, 2010; Bramwell, 2011; Estol & Font, 2016). Governance under the community-based tourism (CBT hereafter) involves the participation of local communities in the management of tourism. CBT has provided two major types of benefit, namely the community's unique background and partnership. The former is important for solving the complex problems of tourism development while the latter can lead to more equitable allocation of benefits for long-term achievement of sustainable development goals (Lemos & Agrawal, 2006). Previous research on CBT planning (Murphy, 1988; Jamal & Getz, 1995; Reid, Mair, & George, 2004; Wan, 2013; Bello, 2015), community participation (Simmons, 1994; Tosun, 2000; Li, 2006; Ying & Zhou, 2007; Wang, Long, & Zheng, 2015) and community attitude toward tourism management (Teye, Sirakaya, & Sönmez, 2002; Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005; Choi & Murray, 2010; Yu, Chancellor, & Cole, 2011; Jia & Wang, 2015) found that active community participation and partnership with relevant stakeholders are important for the CBT development. Nevertheless, other research has questioned the long-term results from the CBT. Although Roberts and Hall (2001) found that CBT development has spurred economic, ecological and societal development, Zapata, Hall, Lindo, and Vanderschaeghe (2012) argued that CBT development ignored the economic assessment caused by social and environmental impacts. Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2010) suggest that communities are likely to suffer from traffic congestion, increasing crime rates, waste water generation, and increasing cost of living under the

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governance of CBT CTB. Nevertheless, the role of government in the CBT development directive is still debatable by many Chinese tourism academics and government professionals. For example, Xidi Village in the Yi County of the historical Huizhou region of Anhui province is successful for their CBT development (Song & Li, 2014), but the regular conflicts between outside enterprises and local community have frequently occurred in the Hongcun Village of the same county (Ying & Zhou, 2007).

Another governance of tourism development is the governance under the lease-to-operate tourism (LOT hereafter). Under the LOT, commercial company is entitled to develop the tourism in the community. LOT has resulted in increased revenues in some locations such as in South Antalya, Turkey (Göymen, 2000); Belek, Turkey (Yüksel, Bramwell, & Yüksel, 2005); Minakami, Japan (Zhu, 2008), Hailuoguo, China (Xu, 2008), and Wuzhen, China (Ryan, Pan, Chou, & Gu, 2014) but low revenues in other locations such as in PRODETUR-NE, Brazilian Northeast (Bartholo, Delamaro, & Bursztyn, 2008) and Maling River, China (Huang, 2010). Li, Ryan, and Cave (2016) found that although LOT has been developed more than 30 years in the Qiyunshan of the Anhui province, actual investment was undertaken only in 2013 and therefore, LOT in the Qiyunshan still remains in its early stage of tourism development. Li et al. (2016) further found that contracts between the operating companies and the provincial authority have been broken many times due to management losses and mismanagement by the contracted companies (Fang & Zhang, 2011). LOT was found to result in ease of management in some location in Bifeng Valley China (Xu, 2005), Jiuzhaigou, China (Yue & Ran, 2005), Taragire, Tanzania (Tanzania National Parks, 2016) and Masai Mara National Reserve, Kenya (Zhang, 2003) but not in other locations such as in Taoping, China; Amboseli Park, Kenya (Zhang, 2003) and Costa Rica (Campbell, 1999, Dong, 2011, Basurto, 2013). As their rights have been ignored, local community blocked the tourism way within the scenic area in Emei Mountain in 2014 (Zuo, 2016). Furthermore, LOT was found to violate the rights of the local people because local people were not part of any decision making processes, even people died during the conflict between outside investor and local people (Fei, 2008).

As Chinese tourists for World Heritage sites in the country have sharply increased over the past 20 years and given that CBT and LOT are being implemented in various tourist sites, understanding the governance system appropriate for a particular situation will provide better-informed information for tourism development. Therefore, effective governance under CBT and LOT need to be assessed so that appropriate policy interventions can be introduced for sustainable development of tourism in China. This study is designed to assess the effective governance systems for tourism development in China with particular focus on tourism development and local perceptions at the Huang Mountain World Heritage Area using the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework developed by Ostrom (2011). The results of this study will form an important part for policy interventions regarding governance of tourism development in China.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Study sites and governance systems

In the current case study site, 6 of the 13 natural villages have developed their own tourism. Two of these natural villages were selected for the present study. As it shows in Fig. 1, the local community in Jade Valley (J) has conducted its own CBT, while the Phoenix Valley (P) has a Lease-Operation Tourism (LOT) that their tourism is managed by an outside private corporation. Both of these valleys are in close proximity at the foot of Mountain Huangshan; the distance between them is approximately only 3 km.

The advantages of having association with the World Heritage Site—Mountain Huangshan are obviously. First, these valleys do not need to worry about tourists' resources. Second, the tourism-related natural resources have been strictly protected by multiple laws and

policies. These valleys have established their own tourism businesses under strong centralized governance concerning natural resource protection.

2.2. Research methods

This study adopted the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework (Ostrom, 2011) to assess the effectiveness governance for tourism development. This framework provides a useful approach to understand a wide variety of institutional arrangements. The IAD framework relies on four evaluating criteria to assess the overall performance of institutional arrangements (Ostrom, Schroeder, & Wynne, 1993; Imperial & Yandle, 2005). Institution here refers to CBT and LOT. Each criteria is followed by evaluate indicators and each indicator has many sub-indicators. Because tourism governance is a complex system that includes economic, natural and social dimensions, we selected the sub-indicators as described in Table 1.

- 1) Three sub-indicators are used to assess the economic efficiency, ecological efficiency and administrative efficiency.
- 2) Equity efficiency concerns fiscal equivalence and redistribution equity.
- 3) Accountability efficiency includes internal accountability and external accountability, which are embodied in the transparency of the governance and the trust in its performance.
- 4) Adaptability reflects the capacity to respond to challenges and "learn by doing". It includes internal adaptability such as capacity building, rules and strategy adjusting. Still, the external adaptability is focus on tourism culture and public relation.

Data from 2012 and 2014 household surveys in Jade Valley and Phoenix Valley were used to evaluate in local livelihood according to various institutional arrangements concerning tourism development and indigenous people's attitudes toward tourism development. This fieldwork mainly included house surveys, open-ended interviews with local residents, officials and key informants and non-participant observation.

Because the number of local households in each of the case study sites did not exceed 50, we aimed to investigate every household. However, 35 of the 46 households in Jade Valley and 36 of the 38 households in Phoenix Valley effectively completed questionnaires. Of these questionnaires, one household from Jade Valley and one household from Phoenix Valley only answered the questions concerning livelihood status, with no evaluations of tourism governance. Thus, the current study included 34 households in Jade Valley and 35 households in Phoenix Valley.

This study also conducted interviews by means of a checklist with the key informants, local government officials, external investor, and the manager and staff of CBT and LOT Company. Of note, all of the 8 interviewees in Jade Valley were staff of CBT. Of these eight interviewees, only one assistant of the chief manager was not a local resident. The interviews included the following topics: the history of tourism development, the evolution of institutional arrangement, the main responsibility and welfare as the local staff, the relationship between the CBT Company, local community and local households, the large events associated with the tourism business, etc. In Phoenix Valley, interviews were conducted with three members of the LOT Company. Because none of the interviewees were local residents, they had limited knowledge about local households' livelihood and the history of local tourism development. Thus, we attempted to obtain additional information from two key informants of the local people, the former head of the community (now, a dooly carrier in the scenic area) and a former manager of the company (now, unemployed).

To assess livelihood status and the perception of the local people toward different tourism governance, the following questions were asked and the answers were scored accordingly (Table 2).

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