

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is carried out to examine the good management practices of the protected areas and to find out how the negative impacts of tourism on environment in these areas are minimized. Finally, it is to create a model of good practices that can be applied to Phobjikha valley in Bhutan.

Hence, the qualitative explanatory research method is used to explain how variables work in a specific aspect of tourism development. Apart from the analysis of case studies, the review of literature pertaining to the negative and the positive effect of tourism on environment are extensively carried out. To combat against negative impact of tourism, the literature review also covers the management practices in quite a few protected areas.

First of all, based on the literature review the challenges faced by the protected area due to the activities of tourism are identified. The four case studies are then thoroughly examined to find out the challenges faced and the best management practices applied to combat the challenges and to minimize the negative impact of tourism in respective areas. In addition to above, an interview with the Tourism Council of Bhutan (TCB) and Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN) of Bhutan is conducted to gather more information on tourism in Bhutan and issues pertaining to environment conservation at Phobjikha Valley.

A snapshot of a social and economic reality is given by analyzing these case studies to extract a useful model that can be applied in other destinations, especially Bhutan.

Research Design

The analysis of four case studies is carried out to examine major themes and management practices. The major themes and management practices in these case studies are management issues, plans and strategies and collaboration among the stakeholders.

The key case studies selected for this thesis are:

1. The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area in Australia
2. Kuscenneti National Park in Turkey
3. Sagarmatha National Park, a World Heritage Site in Nepal
4. Nanda Devi & Valley of Flowers National Park, a World Heritage site in India

Selection of the Case Studies

The above case studies were selected through the internet search in consultation with the advisor. The case studies for the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area in Australia and Kuscenneti National Park in Turkey were selected from the electronic library databases of Southern Cross University, Australia, and later further information was sought directly from the websites of the sites. This was the first case study site that was identified as it had case of impact of tourism to environment. The second case study was chosen as it has similarity in its size and properties with the focused site. Other two case studies were selected based on their location, which falls in the same altitude as that of the focus site.

The first two case studies were studied focusing mainly on the academic journal articles and other two were examined using most of the information from the websites of United Nations Environment Program. Initially, only first two case studies were used for research; however, due to the suggestion provided by the committee in the defend session; other two case studies were incorporated for having a diverse environmental studies of protected areas. The case study of Sagarmatha National Park also draws some information from academic journal. Nanda Devi & the Valley of Flowers National Park has two national parks as the name of the National Park suggests; therefore, each has been discussed separately.

The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area has the largest area and Kuscenneti National Park has smallest. All the above case studies provide insight of protected areas with diverse natural resources and tourism activities that generate income for the local community. Nevertheless, all the sites have been facing the challenge in protecting the environment.

The common feature of Sagarmatha National Park and Nanada Devi & Valley of Flower National Park is that they are located in the Himalaya region, same as that of Phobjikha valley. The similarity between the Kuscenneti National Park and Phobjikha valley is due to its size and popularity for bird species.

Issues of Analysis

The matters pertaining to sustainability of nature-based tourism are taken for analysis. The analysis is done on the following key issues on each case study site:

1. Management issues: What are the management challenges for each case study?
2. Plans and strategies: what are the plans and strategies applied by each case study to combat the problem?
3. Collaboration among the stakeholders

Data collection

Information is collected from the following sources;

1. Keys issues from the case studies
2. The face to face interview is conducted with the following Institution:
 - 2.1 Tourism Authority of Bhutan: Question pertaining to tourism in Bhutan is asked.
 - 2.2 Royal Society for Protection of Nature: Question on present management practice in the Phobjikha Valley to mitigate the problem of negative impact of tourism is asked.

The information sought through these interviews will help to compare issues in Phobjikha valley with the data collected from the case studies.

Framework for Data Analysis

The framework used in analyzing the case studies is outlined as below:

1. Examine the key issues in all the sites
2. Compare and contrast the outcome of the study
3. Relate them to the Phobjikha valley
4. Identify the best practice