

**CONFLICT MEASUREMENT AMONG GROUPS WITHIN A HETEROGENEOUS LOCAL
COMMUNITY IN A RURAL TOURISM DESTINATION :
A Case Study of Gopeng Ecoadventure, Perak, Malaysia**

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ABSTRACT

Enhancement in rural tourism is seen as a positive development and has great potential. Therefore, the responsibility to be played by various stakeholders involved in rural tourism industry as a key player should be highlighted. The role of local people in decision-making process also can not be ignored. This research only focused on internal conflict going on between several stakeholders such as local residents, chalet and homestay operators, and adventure-based operators as well as indigenous community in a rural tourism destination. The location chosen is located in Ecoadventure Gopeng, Perak, Malaysia, a Rawanese Malay traditional villages and potentially promote as a eco-adventure tourism destination. The conflict in the resources management among themselves directly become a barrier to the success of tourism development. According to literature review, internal conflict exists in several forms such as personal relationships, family, tourism and environmental management and identity (especially involving ethnicity, race or religion). Hence, conflicts can occur especially when the actors against each other to achieve incompatible goals. Generally, the objective of this paper is to understand the ongoing conflict in theoretical and applied measurement in assessing the seriousness of the conflict in the study area. This measurement can also help in determining the magnitude of conflict that can be used in solving the conflict. The results of this study will provide a positive impact in offer ways to resolve conflicts among groups within a heterogeneous local community and contributing towards a better rural tourism industry. Finally, integration and cooperative spirit among locals became a major success towards responsible tourism.

Keyword: conflict measurement, conflict resolution, heterogeneous group, responsible tourism, Gopeng Ecoadventure

INTRODUCTION

Determination of rural tourism success is dependent on the assistance given by the local community, stakeholders and government agency or department involved. In resolving the rural tourism development, collaboration between these groups is too important and interdependent with each other. Each of the planning process should be carried out emphasizing the needs and desires of the locals sensitivity and is viewed as a component of the process of integration to measure the sustainability of rural tourism in particular.

In this situation, the local population is the subject plays an important role to enhance the impact of the tourism industry to maximize the use of local resources and not as an object to be taken easily. This is one of aspect in determining the development of tourism products based on rural communities. If seen in the past 50 years, the community is only gain a small benefit from tourism activities carried out in their area. Therefore, the enhancement of socio-economic will open up more job opportunities given to young people. Community involvement is also important in the decision making process between stakeholders and should not be ignored.

The government departments usually seen as a launcher or main party to start bonding between stakeholders in the tourism development prospect. In addition, the government has to set the vision, strategies and initiatives that are appropriate in driving the development and cooperation between them. In addition, the level of cooperation in the form of aid as an incentive, as well as relevant training will reduce the burden and foster engaged communities to participate in tourism activities available.

Furthermore, private parties carrying out any business activity in a rural area is also seen as a key player in the success of tourism development. The private sector should not only emphasize the purely profit but at the same time respect the socio-cultural, lifestyle, the environment of rural tourism destination. Cooperation should achieve objectives as well as fostering mutual assistance to each other.

Conflict between stakeholders also often exists and discord in many ways as a threat of physical, mental and psychological, financial and others. This indicator gives a bad impression of the development of rural tourism especially to foreign tourists. This matter should not be curtailed in advance will persist without solution and point fingers at each other without discussing to resolve the issues. These conflicts often arise because each party did not understand the mission to be achieved by the respective parties and unhealthy competition. Mutual assistance is also not highlighted and only requires at a particular time only. Unhealthy conflict will provide major implications, particularly for the rural tourism operators. Rural tourism should be a catalyst to strengthen unity among the stakeholders rather than mere profit.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Stakeholder

According to Freeman (1984), he pointed out that the **stakeholder** is the relationship which exists between specific groups or individuals, including employees, customers, suppliers, government and society in general. Each group will be divided based on the characteristics and their main interest especially in tourism activities offered. Meanwhile, Gray (1989) defined stakeholders as interested parties for those

who have an interest in the same problems and issues that cover individuals, groups, organizations with either influence directly from the steps to the solution.

Donaldson and Preston (1995) has a different view in this definition. Stakeholders can be considered as the individual or group that has a tendency in procedural or corporate activities primarily give importance to them. All stakeholders are considered can provide any ideas and be involved in decision making between each party.

Figure 1 : Tourism Stakeholders Map. Adapted from Freeman (1984:55)

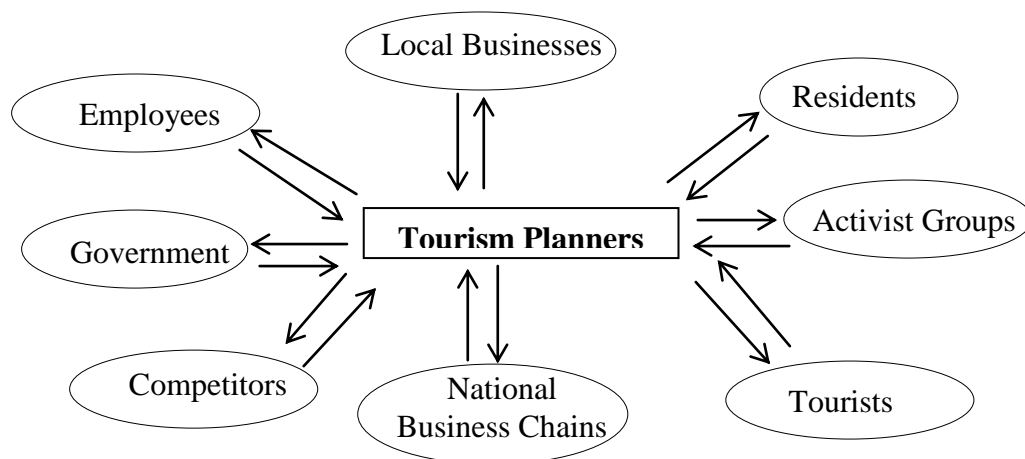


Figure 1 shows how the relationship between several number of stakeholders, particularly in the run of tourism initiatives. Generally, tourism planner is seen as key agents in strategy formulation and use of the various processes. Each stakeholder typically has a set of needs and expectations towards tourism activities. If not controlled, this gap may cause conflict among them.

Stakeholder Theory

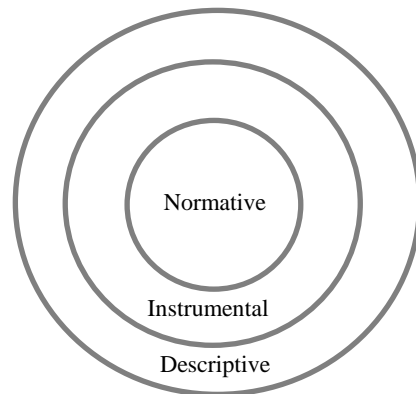
In managing stakeholder management to be more structured, Freeman (1984) introduced the **Stakeholder Theory** which focuses relationship of the parties involved in tourism activities, requirements and needs of each party; and how to achieve the goal. Generally, it will discuss further on stakeholder's attributes, interest and influence. This suggests that the emphasis on management and organizational context to include any individual or group who can affect or influence the performance and objectives of the organization.

According to Goodpastor (1991) and Frooman (1999), they argued that this theory will be able to distinguish between the strategic and moral stakeholders. Strategic stakeholders is a management to achieve the interests of each group, meanwhile moral stakeholders only focusing on how to balance the interests of each stakeholder.

From a management point of view, stakeholder's theory asserts that every group is represented to have an indirect influence of decision making process (Jones, 1995). This means that, in achieving stakeholder management strategy is more effective, Freeman (1984) suggested that each organisation need to understand the three (3) main principles:

- (a) Identify the stakeholders and their interests
- (b) The process to manage each stakeholder
- (c) Management and interdependence between stakeholders

Figure 2 : Three Aspect of Stakeholder Theory



Donaldson and Preston (1995) suggest that the components of the stakeholder theory is composed of normative, instrumental and descriptive. **Normative** theories will be when stakeholders are individuals or groups who have a legitimate interest in the organization and have intrinsic value. Thus, the theory of normative stakeholders stressed that everyone should be treated and valued in order to protect their respective interests (Jawahar and McLaughlin, 2001).

Stakeholder theory can be as **instrumental** as it sets the framework for examining the relationship between the practice of stakeholder management and the achievement of corporate performance goals. At this point, it can be measured by the success of sustained profit, long term growth and stakeholder management process.

Stakeholder theory is **descriptive** when the model describes the interaction between an organization and its stakeholders. Generally, it will prove the importance of competition and have intrinsic value. In addition, it is also concerned about how management actually dealing with stakeholders (Berman, 1999).

Conflict

According to Bartos and Wehr (2002), the **conflict** can be defined as a situation where the actors use conflict behaviour to against each other to attain incompatible goals and to show their hostility.

However, March and Simon (1958) defined conflict as a breakdown of the mechanisms of decision making process performance. In addition, the conflict also stands as a condition that exists between two or more parties to the contrary until one deprivation of hostilities activities (Litterer, 1966).

Terms of conflicts is a condition in which the occurrence of anxiety conditions, incompatibility and doubt experienced by an individual in choosing some options or against a situation that occurred at the same time (Akbalik, 2001).

Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution can be defined as the process used by the parties in reaching a solution (Sweeney & Carruthers, 1996). Meanwhile, Blake and Mounton suggested that each individual has two main reasons that cause a tendency for conflict. The first is the conflict that arises in order to achieve personal desires and the second is to achieve the desire conflict with other parties (Interpersonal Relationships).

- (a) **Intergroup Conflicts** : Conflicts between different groups in terms of ethnicity, race, religion and gender.
- (b) **Moral Conflicts** : Conflicts due to basic values that are difficult to be solved
- (c) **Religious Conflicts** : Conflict between the same and different parties, between followers and leaders.
- (d) **Family and Gender Conflicts** : Interpersonal conflicts occur within families between genders

- (e) **Organizational Conflicts** : Interpersonal conflicts with other groups, peers, subordinates, intergroup or interorganization.
- (f) **Cultural Conflicts** : Conflicts arise when there are differences of cultural background
- (g) **Intractable Conflicts** : Difficult, long standing, intractable conflicts occur at all levels (interpersonal, intergroup and international)

Level of Conflict Intervention

Typically, the conflict will occur in four (4) main stages :

- (a) **Intrapersonal Conflicts** : Involves dynamic individual who can develop according to their tendencies, thoughts, ideas, emotions and drives that come in conflict with each other.
- (b) **Interpersonal Conflicts** : Occurred between individuals such as family relationships, colleagues, neighbours and others. Conflict usually arise at this stage.
- (c) **Intragroup Conflicts** : Occurred between each member of the group at work, departments, clubs, organizations and political parties. Each individual is fit to understand the needs and behaviour of every other members.
- (d) **Intergroup Conflicts** : Occurred between different political or management group leader and there is hostility to the members, citizens, police as well as leaders.

Type of conflict can be categorized according to the different groups such as personal, organizational, community, state and region.

Table 1 : Levels of Conflict

TYPES OF CONFLICT	LEVELS OF CONFLICT	UNITS
Personal	Intrapsychic Interpersonal	Individuals
Family	Interpersonal(intragroup) Intergroup	Individuals Groups
Labor Management	Interorganizational	Organizations
Environmental	Group-organizational Intrasocietal/Intrastate Intersocial/Intrastate Interstate	Groups Organizations Societies States
Identity (ethnic, racial, religious)	Intergroup (intrasocietal/intersocietal) Intra/Interstate	Groups Societies States
International / Interstate “civilizational”	States	Civilizations

Collaboration Theory

According Inskep (1991), the importance of an effective organization is based on the structure of sustainable tourism management and integrate. Moreover, in achieving coordination between government agencies, the public and the private sector, the challenges to be overcome by providing the development of appropriate mechanisms and processes for various tourism system.

Contrary to the opinion of Gray (1989), he stressed that the collaboration is effective to solve the conflict that arises between each other or share a common vision

in which stakeholders view and evaluating the potential of each party together. It is also seen as a process to connect and work together to make decisions in the future.

Collaboration system in tourism is seen as a joint venture between the major parties of certain organizations to assist communities in resolving issues that arise and manage it wisely. The core planning of development in addressing this problem.

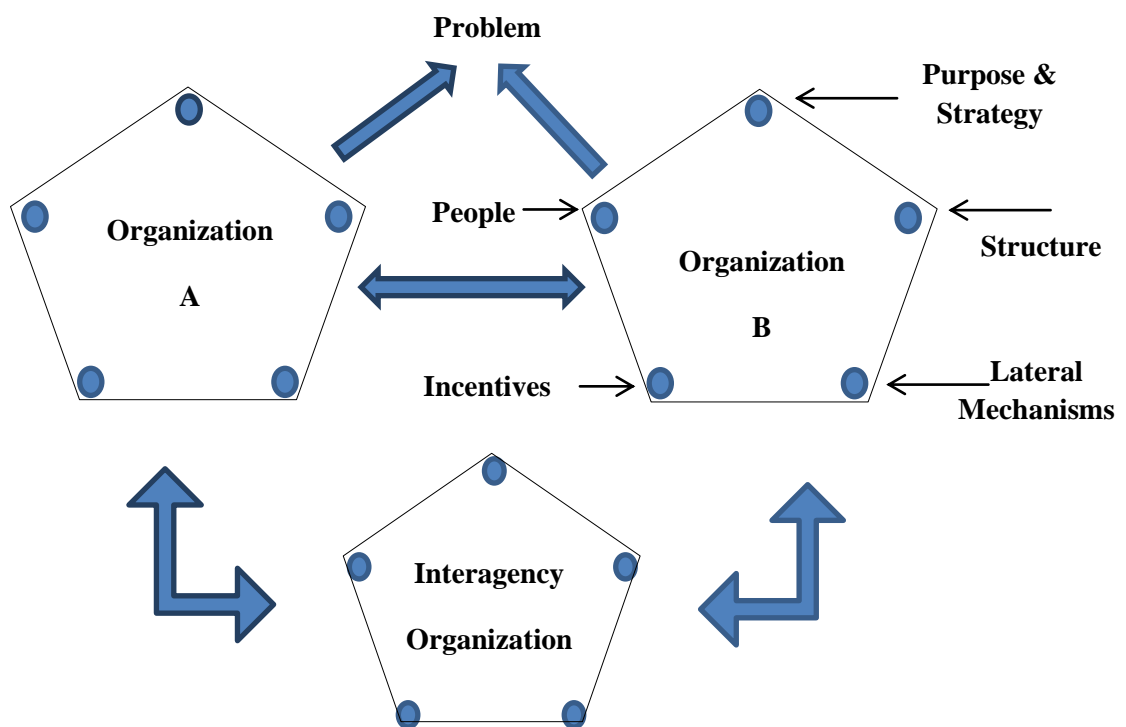
Figure 3 : A Collaboration Process for Community Based Tourism Planning (Gray, 1989)

STAGES AND PROPOSITIONS	FACILITATING CONDITONS
Stage 1: Problem Setting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recognition of interdependence 2. Identification of a required number of stakeholders 3. Legitimate/skilled convener 4. Positive beliefs about outcomes 5. Shared access power 6. Adeqaute resources to convene and enable collaboration process
Stage 2 : Direction Setting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coincidence of values 2. Dispersion of power among stakeholders
Stage 3 : Implementation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.High degree of ongoing interdependence 2. External mandates 3. Redistribution of power 4. Influencing the contextual environment

Interorganizational Collaboration Model

This model highlights peneriaan some areas, the application of knowledge to maximize the potential of tourism to manage complex and unclear. Party is seen as the major operators that can provide focus and interdependence of other organizations in making the decision (Sellin and Beason, 1991:649). Application of this model is seen to refer to the whole community involvement that are appropriate for use in planning rural tourism in particular.

Figure 4 : Interorganizational Collaboration Model



CONCLUSION

In integrating all stakeholders in rural tourism destination in particular, cooperation with each other and an understanding of the objectives to be achieved by each parties must be understood and respected. In the wish to enhance rural tourism development, each party is expected to reach a 'win-win situation' of which hit the target each set without any hostilities occur. Conflicts among the parties is inappropriate and should be dealt with immediately. The government could be in the middle of handling industry's strategy to develop successfully.

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