THE KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN TWO RURAL TOWNS OF THAILAND

by

Siripen Dabphet
Department of Tourism,
Faulty of Business, Economics and Communications,
Naresuan University, Thailand
E-mail: siripend@nu.ac.th

ABSTRACT

The support of tourism stakeholders is essential for the development, successful operation, and long-term sustainability of tourism. Tourism stakeholders include many different types of groups depending on geographically-based in the different parts of the area. However, not all stakeholders have the same level of interest in sustainable tourism development and may be less active or not active at all. Moreover, some stakeholders are more important than others in determining the success of activities. For this reason, this paper identifies the key tourism stakeholders in implementing sustainable tourism development and to provide a synthesis of the similarity and differences in the characteristics of the tourism stakeholders found in two rural towns of Thailand. The primary data collection involved semi-structured, in-depth interviews undertaken with 30 respondents and data were analyzed using content analysis. The study found two major groups of stakeholder to the implementation of the sustainable tourism development: experts and suppliers. Potential experts include tourism organizations, local councils, government departments, tourism-oriented non-governmental organizations and other quasi-government organizations. Suppliers are local community and local community organizations. The results validate the use of stakeholder theory as a mean to understand stakeholders' point of view, goals and issues in the implementation of sustainable tourism development.

KEYWORDS
Stakeholder, Sustainable Tourism Development, Thailand

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is considered a valuable economic development opportunity for many countries, yet the expansion of tourism worldwide has also led to emerging concern about its negative impacts on host environments (Berrittella, Bigano, Roson, & Tol, 2006; Choi & Sirakaya, 2006). As a result, there is increasing agreement on the need to promote sustainable tourism development with the aim of minimizing environmental and socio-cultural impacts, while commensurately maximizing economic benefits for tourist destinations (Cole, 2006; Wight, 2003).

Since the 1990s, sustainable tourism development has gained attention and been adopted as a policy and planning approach by many governments around the world (Pigram & Wahab, 1997). Thailand included have declared their interest in and commitment to sustainable tourism development principles, motivated partly by the fact that tourism itself is often impeded by negative side effects which reduce the quality of life of local residents, along with the satisfaction levels of tourists (Mowforth & Munt, 2003). However, while the concept of sustainable tourism development is widely considered integral to successful tourism development, including the paper's focus, the development of Nong Mae Na and Nen-Piem community, Thailand, there remain a range of problems which mitigate against positive sustainable tourism development outcomes. These include a lack of clear understanding of the key stakeholders in implementing sustainable tourism development and secondly, not all stakeholders have the same level of interest in sustainable tourism development and may be less active or not active at all. Moreover, some stakeholders are more important than others in determining the successful sustainable tourism development (Cooper et al., 2006). For this reason, the objectives of this study are to identify the key tourism stakeholders in implementing sustainable tourism development and to provide a synthesis of the similarity and differences in the characteristics of the tourism stakeholders found in two rural towns of Thailand. In order to achieve this, the thesis is underpinned by theories derived from the areas of sustainable tourism development and stakeholders.

UNDERSTANDING "SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT"

Sustainable tourism development research has attracted increased recognition within academic literature over the last decade. However, it is important to have an awareness of what is understood by sustainable tourism development. The term 'sustainable tourism' became much more commonly used from about the early 1990s, along with an array of related terms including 'natural tourism' (Durst & Ingram, 1988), 'responsible tourism' (Wheeler, 1991; WTO, 1989), 'green tourism' (Bramwell, 1991), 'eco-tourism' (Boo, 1990), and 'alternative tourism' (Butler, 1999a; Clarke, 1997). Nonetheless, what all have in common is a core concern with small-scale tourism and the adoption, as well as promotion, of a clean and green image (Butler, 1999a).

Many researchers involved in the study of tourism have suggested sustainability is conceptually important, however difficult to implement due to its indeterminate definition. Some researchers (Archer & Cooper, 1998; Ham & Weiler, 2002) have attempted to concentrate on the relationship between economics and the environment. Alternately, Butler (1999b) defined the concept of sustainable tourism development within three areas of sustainable development (environmental, socio-cultural, economic) and associated it with the idea of carrying capacity, while Ahn, Lee and Shafer (2002) argued that carrying capacity is not an objective of sustainability and fails to take into account relationships between use and impact. On the other hand, Lane (1994, p.102) suggested sustainable tourism should aim 'to minimize environmental and cultural damage, optimize visitor satisfaction, and maximize long-term economic growth for the region'.

The most commonly used, however, as well as ultimately most encompassing definition of the concept is that of the World Travel and Tourism Council (1995, p.30), referring to sustainable tourism as:

> "Tourism which meets the needs of the present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems."

This definition was subsequently adopted by the World Tourism Organization (1998), viewing sustainable tourism as the conservation of composite tourist destination resources for continuous future use, while still benefiting present societies. To this end, it remains evident that tourism literature broadly acknowledges environmental, economic and socio-cultural dimensions as a 'triple bottom line' (Allenby & Richards, 1999, p.3), and key concerns of governments and tourism organizations alike (Godde, Price, & Zimmermann, 2000; Lu & Nepal, 2009).

STAKEHOLDER THEORY AND STAKEHOLDERS IN THE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

According to Freeman (1984, p.46), a stakeholder is 'any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives'. The UNWTO identified stakeholders in tourism destinations as tourism professionals, public authorities, as well as the press and other media. In addition, other interest groups and individuals and in particular local residents and indigenous groups, also need proper recognition as stakeholders in their own right (Macbeth, Burns, Chandler, Revitt, & Veitch, 2002). For the purposes of this study, and following Aas et al. (2005, p.4), tourism stakeholders include any individuals or groups involved, interested in, or affected (positively or negatively) by tourism. According to these authors, effective stakeholder engagement must therefore 'reduces potential conflicts between the tourists and host community by involving the latter in shaping the way in which tourism develops'. In terms of sustainable tourism development, Swarbrooke(2001) divided stakeholders into five main categories: governments, tourists, host communities, tourism business and other sectors. Each group of stakeholders is a critical component of the tourism destination due to the fact that the initiatives and thoughts of stakeholders are external to the strategic planning and management processes (Dill, 1975). Robson and Robson (1996, p.543) in particular asserted that the involvement of stakeholders in tourism has 'the potential to provide a framework within which sustainable tourism development can be delivered'. However, perceptions of sustainable tourism development must be considered on a case by case basis, given that what constitutes sustainable tourism development may well depend on the values of the stakeholders concerned. As Wall (1997, p.46) noted on this point, 'what is considered sustainable now may not be sustainable in the future due to population changes, emerging technologies and changing tastes'. Moreover, different management regimes and personalities can affect who stakeholders are perceived to be, and how their needs are perceived which can affect the goals and directions of tourism management (Paskaleva-Shapira, 2007). To achieve sustainable tourism development, it remains essential that the particular perceptions of the concept among destination stakeholders are incorporated into any attempt to development sustainable tourism development within it.

In addition, stakeholder theory has been widely used in tourism as stakeholders' interdependency and their ability impact on the development process of the tourism destination (Jamal & Getz, 1995). In fact, the theory has been developed both to explain, and to guide, the structure and operation of the established corporation (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). Robson and Robson (1996) further stated that one of the key principles of stakeholder theory is that an organization is granted license to operate by virtue of its social contract with stakeholders. It has also been observed that stakeholders' knowledge and experience in tourism management, participation in tourism planning and development processes and long-term community involvement have played an important role in tourism destination management (Hardy & Beeton, 2001; Leiper, 1995). However, while each group of stakeholder plays an important role in the development of tourism, some stakeholders are more important than others in determining the success of activities (Vincent, 1990). For example, when it comes to sustainable tourism development outcomes, governments remain particularly concerned with issues relating to tourism infrastructure, such as transportation and accommodation (Hardy & Beeton, 2001). Alternately, host communities are often more concerned with local issues, such as the effects of tourism on their community, their quality of life and the need for sustainability (Getz & Timur, 2005). Tourism businesses themselves are generally more concerned with issues directly affecting their business, such as the tourism product, marketing and tourist satisfaction or dissatisfaction, while tourists are usually more focused on the quality of the tourism product when it comes to a destination (Hardy & Beeton, 2001). Freeman (1984) also viewed that in order to implement stakeholder theory, the organization needs to have a full appreciation of all the persons or groups who have interests in planning, process(es), delivery and/or outcomes of the product or service. From this view, the point remains that sustainable tourism development involves both personal and contextual component, meaning what is perceived as sustainable practices in one location may well differ significantly when compared to another. As such, identifying the key stakeholders in implementing sustainable tourism development and understanding of how each group of stakeholders exert their interests in sustainable tourism development is inevitable.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research method was used for data collection due to the fact that qualitative methods offer varied empirical procedures designed to describe and interpret the experiences of research participants in a context-specific setting. Data were collected via semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 30 representatives. In order to capture the widest variety of local, regional and national viewpoints on the implementation of sustainable tourism development situation, local residents, governmental, non-governmental and academic stakeholders were included.

Local residents constituted in this study as their involvement in tourism planning and decision-making is important for the sustainable tourism development concept (Jackson & Morpeth, 2000). A sampling strategy was devised to ensure that as much as possible, participating residents were representative of a cross-section of the community. Residents sampled included those who lived either in the tourism or in the non-tourism zone and who were either directly or indirectly involved with, and/or affected by tourism activities. Many of the residents who were interviewed and who were involved in the industry were employed as local guides or were proprietors of home-stay accommodation and resorts, or souvenir and food-catering shops. A total of 20 local residents participated in in-depth interviews. Convenience sampling constitutes a nonprobability technique that attempts to obtain a sample of convenient elements; overall, it is both less expensive and less time-consuming when compared with other sampling techniques (Malhotra, 2004) and thus particularly suitable to this study, given its resource limitations.

Governmental institutions had an integral role in sustainable tourism development initiatives. Thus, they were contacted to participate in the study and to assist in establishing a snowball sample of other respondents, this being considered the most applicable method, as the researcher was not well informed about the local formal or informal 'network connections'(Jennings, 2001, p.139). The process began with the researcher choosing a few respondents involved in decision-making roles for the destination – in this case governmental institutions that participated in the study included the Town Council, Sub-District Administration Organization. Other relevant stakeholders interviewed were the local tourist office, a non-governmental organization and academics. In total, 10 governmental respondents were interviewed until a saturation point was reached.

Interview questions were developed based on key themes related to the sustainable tourism development concept and stakeholders. These questions were pilot tested with five local residents in August 2012. The pilot interviews led to alterations in: (1) the time of day for interviews and how potential respondents were approached, and (2) the interview questions, which were revised using simpler and non-technical terminology. In-depth interviews were conducted in September 2012. The questions were open-ended to allow opportunities for probing to obtain further insights and richer data. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and organized based on the interview questions. Content analysis of the interviews transcripts was employed, with the constructs in the content analysis technique operationalized by organizing the data into categories based on themes, concepts or other common features, from which

new concepts can then be developed, conceptual definitions formulated and relationships between concepts drawn and examined (Ruhanen, 2006). The data were sorted into the categories using key words as codes (manifest and latent) once the thematic framework approach had been applied to the data sets (Berg, 2004). Then, comparative analysis was used to compare and contrast data and build upon existing knowledge currently in the field.

Area of Study

Thailand has indicated a desire to develop the country and tourism in particular in a sustainable manner, beginning with the Sixth National Tourism Development Plan (1987-1991) with a focus on rehabilitation and conservation of tourist attractions and the 'greening' of Thai tourism (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 1996). Subsequent organizations have been established to support the implementation of sustainable tourism development include the Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (DASTA) in 2003. The key roles and responsibilities are over sustainable tourism operation, through coordination for integrated administration of areas with valuable tourism resources, with more flexibility and promptness in operation than that of government agencies and state enterprises, as an important driving force in the administration of the country's tourism industry both in short and long terms. More recently, in 2008, the Thailand Community Based Tourism Institution (CBT-I) was established to develop the potentials of communities and operating officials to create community tourism caretakers (The North) with the objective to build up a paradigm of potentials and abilities of community residents towards the administration of tourism and problem solving by the communities themselves, while enhancing the knowledge and building up skills as well as preparing various tools in the learning process for the communities, by community tourism caretakers as the prototype communities of CBT-I (DASTA, 2012). The following two subsections describe the geography and recent tourism background of the towns under the responsibilities of DASTA and CBT-I.

Nong Mae Na Community

Nong Mae Na community is located in Tambon Nong Mae Na, KhaoKho District, Phetchabun Province. The town covers an area of 290 km^2 with landscape of rolling hills and fertile fields where the villagers plant maize, chilies and vegetables, as well as raising animals. Beautiful nature and fine weather makes Nong Mae Na a perfect spot for eco-tourists. Since 2007, the Community Tourism Management and Conservation Area of Nong Mae Na have become well known for balancing tourism and conservation. The number of tourists has been growing rapidly in recent years, especially between March and April, nature enthusiasts make the journey to see one of the world's rarest species of jellyfish, found in only 2 places in Asia.
However, while tourism has risen to become the leading economic sector benefiting community, the residents feel imbalances favoring urban, tourism, industrial, commercial and infrastructural developments. Moreover, environmental groups have concerned for opening the town to tourism developers. As such, most of the planning and development of the attraction has been concentrated on the need to co-exist with the natural environment to achieve sustainable tourism.

Nen-Piem Community

Nen-Piem community is a piedmont plateau region located in Nakhon Thai District, Phitsanulok Province with an area of approximately 366.40 km^2. The community is comprised by 3,927 families with a total population of 11,629 persons (the Thais and the Hmong hill tribes). The majority of land use is for agriculture and the remainder is corn plantation and some small fields of crops.
Although the area has already been noted for its rich biodiversity due to species conservation and highly valuable for tourism, the community is not a very developed tourism destination because the community lacks variation in its tourism offering, suffers from low occupancy rates, relatively poor service quality and lack of or insufficient infrastructure. On the other hand, unmanaged development of some local and non-local residents for obtaining short-term economic gains is another problem. In terms of sustainable tourism, there have been some initiatives implemented prior to this study being conducted. These initiatives however have been faced with a slow implementation, and although developed in theory, they have not been entirely adopted in practice.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The aim of this research was to identify the key tourism stakeholders in implementing sustainable tourism development, especially focused on the similarity and differences in the characteristics of the stakeholders.

The Key Stakeholders in Implementing Sustainable Tourism development

The respondents interviewed were first asked to identify which groups should be consulted in implementing sustainable tourism development. From the perspective of the respondents, there is a general agreement that diverse groups of stakeholders should in fact be consulted when implementing sustainable tourism development principles. The key tourism stakeholders in implementing sustainable tourism development in two rural towns of Thailand can be categorized into two main themes: experts and suppliers. Experts are groups or bodies that are involved in the actual planning or organizing sustainable tourism development. Suppliers are ones who contribute tourism goods and services in the destination. Potential experts include government bodies, tourism-oriented non-governmental organizations, industry bodies and educational institutions. Suppliers are local community organizations and local community. However, respondents in both towns have different views when it comes to the key tourism stakeholders in implementing sustainable tourism development (Table 1).

TABLE 1
KEY TOURISM STAKEHOLDERS IN IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABLE
TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE TWO RURAL TOWNS OF THAILAND

Key Stakeholders	Nong Mae Na Community	Nen-Piem Community
Experts	- Tourism-oriented non-governmental organizations - Educational institutions - Government bodies - Industry bodies	- Educational institutions - Government bodies
Suppliers	- Local community organizations - Local community	- Local community - Local community organizations

From the perspective of the respondents, there is a general agreement that diverse groups of stakeholders should in fact be consulted when implementing sustainable tourism development principles. However, while educational institutions and government bodies are the key experts for both towns, the Nong Mae Na residents also identified industry bodies and tourism-oriented non-governmental organizations within this group. This may be because tourism in this town continues to grow more rapidly than the other town, especially for eco-tourism. The area provides a number of resources and opportunities to assist tourism industry operators with their day-to-day business activities. As such, the industry bodies have a stake in sustainability in the area. It is evident from the findings that some tourism operators have recognized that promoting conservation and sustainable tourism development can maintain the cultural and biological integrity of the places, enhancing the quality of the product they are selling and improve their reputation and their repeat business. In this way, the findings support existing literature that the industry bodies are part of sustainable tourism development process from the beginning as poorly planned tourism can causes environmental conditions to worsen in an area and in turn, affect their businesses (Swarbrooke, 2001; Lewis, 2006; Creaco & Querini, 2003).

Educational institutions (academics and students) also play many important roles in sustainable tourism development process. The academics are seen as the producers of the educational experience in that they are ultimately responsible for the planning, development and delivery of the tourism knowledge. The students are the direct consumers of tourism education as they are the primary recipients of tourism education. From the respondents' perspective, these two groups are the most obvious and are central to tourism education. It was also found that a lack of specific academic and training resources is at the root of many problems with unsustainable tourism development for the destinations. As Cortese (2003, p.17) noted, 'higher education institutions bear a profound, moral responsibility to increase awareness, knowledge, skills and values needed to create a just and sustainable future'. The findings also support the study of Dabphet (2010) that educational involved in providing a better understanding of tourism and sustainable tourism development through communities. As such, educational institutions are involved in collective actions. It can be seen that educational institutions will have the responsibility and considerable influence as their perceptions and preoccupations about tourism, intellectual history and social location will determine the choice of personnel and reflect on the type of tourism developed (Tribe, 1999)

Additionally, the respondents from these two rural towns identified unique stakeholder groups for government bodies. For the Nong Mae Na respondents, local government bodies such as the sub-district administrative organization remained the key actor in implementing sustainable tourism development, with the effect not only of providing information, but also embedding this in dense networks of social interaction within the area. The findings are consistent with previous study (Dabphet, Scott, & Ruhanen, 2012) which revealed the important of local government authorities in the implementation of sustainable tourism development on Kret Island, Thailand. On the other hand, National Park Authorities play a key role in the Nen-Piem community due to some areas of the community is parts of national park. Thus, National Park Authorities are required to produce National Park Plans which set out its policy for managing the park area and co-ordinating its functions and the functions of other bodies in relation to the national park.The findings support relevant literature that National Park Authorities not only collectively possess many years' experience of managing large numbers of visitors, but also taking a lead role in supporting the promotion of sustainable tourism principles (Sharpley & Pearce, 2007).

In the context of tourism, tourism associations and organizations vary in size, level of development, ownership and control. They are typically funded and operated by government at all level. However, tourism-oriented non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are becoming increasingly relevant as an alternative and legitimate source of tourism development. As Jafari (2000) noted, a tourism-oriented NGO is considered to be any not-for-profit government which concentrates around development issues, especially on health issues and poverty alleviation. The study found the Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (DASTA) and the Thailand Community Based Tourism Institution (CBT-I) involved in the implementation of sustainable tourism development in both towns. These organizations support for tourism development as a form of poverty reduction. They help support and empower local communities by providing jobs, skills and home-ownership through community and conservation projects. Furthermore, these tourism-oriented NGOs are also becoming increasingly involved in sustainable activities, especially on creating a value and exchange of interest for both tourists and the host community members. For instance, the CBT-I delivers many sustainable tourism development programs and also providing a channel for local input into development for the towns. According to Fisher (1993) and Liburd (2004), the spread of NGOs is a turning point in tourism because they are able to fill or reduce the gap between the top and bottom of society by including diverse approaches and sustainable practices of tourism to the areas. It can be assumed that NGOs have the potential in creativity responsiveness and flexibility in sustainable tourism development initiatives.

Suppliers such as local community and local community organizations were considered important stakeholders for both towns. The community was considered important stakeholder in implementing sustainable tourism development by all of respondents. This was based upon the belief that tourism was held within the community, it had the opportunity to affect community member in a number of positive and negative ways. Therefore, the involvement of local community participation is also considered integral to ensure tourism development becomes sustainable (Cole, 2006; Zhao & Ritchie, 2007). Additionally, community organizations are involved in the operationalizing of tourism activities with organizing and planning sustainable tourism activities such as trekking and kayaking as these activities have minimal impact on the environment of the host community.

However, there are differences between these towns due to the role of the community and community organizations. For example, an organizing committee has been formed which is inclusive of local community members at Nong Mae Na but there is no any formal community organizations in the Nen-Piem community. Moreover, the community involvement in tourism is limited in this area. As can be seen that while the community organization such as the Nong Mae Na Community-Based Tourism Network organization and local residents cooperate with Thai tour operators to adapt sustainable tourism principlesto decrease and minimize tourism's negative impacts, only few local residents volunteer in operating and organizing tourism activities in the Nen-Piem community. Therefore, the lack of local community consideration can be seen as the main problems in sustaining tourism for the community as without the attendance and participation of local community tourism would cease to exist. Doorne (2004) has suggested on this point that for the participation of communities to be realized, the goal of community participation must be part of a systematic approach to realizing shared development objectives. However, some respondents argue that the lack of community participation is not the case in the Nen-Piem community but the town is in the national park area, therefore, government bodies have control over the destination.

The Characteristics of Tourism Stakeholders in the Implementation of Sustainable Tourism Development

According to the stakeholder theory, each group of stakeholders has different as well as similar characteristics depending on the basis of attributes and criteria appropriate to the situation. These may include the relative power and interest of each stakeholder (Freeman, 1984), the networks and coalitions to which they belong (Freeman & Gilbert, 1987) and the importance and influence they have (Grimble & Wellard, 1997).

This study is based on 30 interviews with tourism stakeholders. The sample was taken from two rural towns in Thailand (Nong Mae Na n=15, Nen-Piem n=15). The characteristics of stakeholders in this study were ranked include: importance, knowledge, skills and power (Table 2).

TABLE 2
RANKING OF THE OVERALL CHARACTERISTICS OF STAKEHOLDERS IN TWO RURAL TOWNS

Attributes	Experts	Suppliers
importance	30	27
knowledge	23	-
skills	17	-
power	15	23

Respondents in this study pointed out that importance is a main characteristic of both expert and supplier stakeholder. This can due to the fact that each group of stakeholders has many roles in tourism sustainability. In deed a number of respondents cited that experts are not only important in funding, but also in participating in boarder, strategic-level promotion and marketing projects. For example, the Thailand Community Based Tourism Institution (CBT-I) improved communication and coordinate of activities such as development of a shared website, seminars and staff exchanges in order to increase the idea of sustainability to communities. However, some respondents argued that while the governments are important in supporting sustainable tourism development, these organizations do not necessarily have to play an equivalently active role in the implementation process. It also depends upon how effectively local communities and community organizations can participate in and has involvement with the tourism industry. In combination with expert, it remains essential that both the well-being and needs of local communities are genuinely addressed and incorporated within the implementation and management processes of sustainable tourism development (Kamamba, 2003).

The findings also revealed a link between importance and power attribute in implementing sustainable tourism development. Etzionis (1964) defined power in terms of access coercive, utilitarian or normative means to impose a party's will in a relationship. Although tourism is privately operated, government at all levels has the power to control in the industry, especially in planning and decision-making process. As the study found while the Nong Mae Na sub-district administrative organization provide advice and policy representation, other stakeholders (communities and industry bodies) are not fully committed to sustainable tourism development but they follow the leader. The findings support previous researches, which reveal that sustainable tourism development cannot be achieved without governance because of its nature to foster common goal by collective action (Zeijl-Rozema, Cörvers, Kemp, & Martens, 2008). In discussing suppliers, numerous researchers (Fallon & Kriwoken, 2003; Manyara & Jones, 2007; Tosun, 2006) have identified local communities as key players in conserving tourism resources, considering many take an active role developing tourism within their local areas and provide valuable local knowledge and information. Local communities then have power when it comes to decisions-making, both between and within community groups as tourism destination is often both their home and place of work.

Another feature key attributed to stakeholder revealed by this study is that of knowledge. Most respondents viewed that experts acted to theoretically underpin peer education programs. In other words therefore, experts can often be seen as educators or trainers providing information within the community, with an emphasis on creating knowledge and awareness in the tourism industry about sustainable tourism development in turn. For instance, some links exist with tourism-oriented non-governmental organizations and educational institutions in the form of work experience programs and extension programs. In doing so, they assist relevant parties to see issues and situations from other points of view, and confirm the ways sustainable tourism development policy supports the community. As many authors have noted, experts who are highly involved with a product are more likely to be interested in, and accumulate knowledge about that product from wide a range of sources (Richins & Root-Shaffer, 1988; Weimann, 1991; 1994)

The final attribute of tourism stakeholder in implementing sustainable tourism development was skills. The study found that while respondents emphasized the importance of skills attribute for experts, they did not mention this dimension for suppliers. This is may be because local communities lack the necessary skills, experience and training to run tourism businesses. Experts then can play a role in the transfer of knowledge and skills to local communities. As tourism development proceeds, locals can gain knowledge and experience in the tourism business. However, some researchers argued that when a destination is too successful, it will do wonders to attract new people and businesses to the area. These new community members will bring with them a host of personal skills, knowledge and experiences that could be utilized by the community (Huang & Stewart, 1996).

CONCLUSION

Sustainable tourism development is considered an appropriate development concept for many tourism destinations. In order for sustainable tourism development to be implemented successfully, there is a need to identify the key stakeholders in the implementation process. This study applied the stakeholder theory examining the type of tourism stakeholders and their characteristics in implementing the concept. Within this study, exports and suppliers were two main stakeholders. Experts such as governments, industry bodies, educational institutions and tourism-oriented NGOs are the core bodies providing and maintaining tourism infrastructure, determining education and training systems, setting rules for business operations, assisting in financing and conducting both market research and promotion. Suppliers include local communities and local community organizations that influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions. Without the support of local communities, the sustainability of tourism is questionable.

In discussing stakeholders' characteristics, it was found that while importance and power are attributes for both groups of stakeholder, knowledge and skills are also key attributes for experts in implementing sustainable tourism development. It seems clear that although both experts and suppliers are important for implementing sustainable tourism development, experts are the ones ultimately responsible for and knowledgeable about tourism development.

REFERENCES

Aas, C., Ladkin, A., & Fletcher, J. (2005). Stakeholder collaborations and heritage management. *Annals of Tourism Research, 32*(1), 28-48.

Ahn, B., Lee, B., & Shafer, C. S. (2002). Operational sustainability in regional tourism planning: An application of the limits of acceptable change framework. *Tourism Management, 23*(1), 1-15.

Allenby, B., & Richards, D. J. (1999). Applying the triple bottom line: Telework and the environment. *Environmental Quality Management 8*(4), 3-10.

Archer, B., & Cooper, C. (1998). The positive and negative impacts of tourism. In W. F. Theobal (Ed.), *Global tourism* (2nd ed., pp. 63-81). Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Berg, B. L. (2004). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (5th ed.). Boston: Pearson.

Berrittella, M., Bigano, A., Roson, R., & Tol, R. S. J. (2006). A general equilibrium analysis of climate change impacts on tourism *Tourism Management, 27*(5), 913-924.

Boo, E. (1990). *Ecotourism: Potential and pitfalls*. Washington, D.C.: World Wildlife Fund.

Bramwell, B. (1991). Sustainability and rural tourism policy in Britain. *Tourism Recreation Research, 16*(2), 49-51.

Butler, R. W. (1999a). Sustainable tourism: A state-of-the-art review. *Tourism Geographies, 1*(1), 7-25.

Butler, R. W. (1999b). Tourism: An evolutionary perspective. In J. G. Nelson, R. W. Butler & G. Wall (Eds.), *Tourism and sustainable development: Monitoring, planning, managing, decision making : A civic approach* (2nd ed., pp. 24-44). Waterloo: University of Waterloo.

Choi, H. C., & Sirakaya, E. (2006). Sustainability indicators for managing community tourism. *Tourism Management, 27*(6), 1274-1289.

Cole, S. (2006). Information and empowerment: The keys to achieving sustainable tourism. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 14*(6), 629-644.

Cooper, C., Scott, N., March, R., Wilkinson, I., Pforr, C., & Thompson, G. (2006). *The network structure of tourism operators in three regions of australia*. Australia: CRC for Sustainable Tourism Pty Ltd.

Cortese, A. D. (2003). The critical role of higher education in creating a sustainable future. *Planning for Higher Education, March-May*, 15-22.

Dabphet, S. (2010). *Diffusion of the concept of sustainable tourism development: A case study on Kret Island, Thailand.* The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia.

Dabphet, S., Scott, N., & Ruhanen, L. (2012). Applying diffusion theory to destination stakeholder understanding of sustainable tourism development: A case from Thailand. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 20*(8), 1107-1124.

DASTA. (2012). Sustainable tourism. 2012, from http://www.dasta.or.th/th/sustain/detail_sustain.php ?ID=143&SystemModuleKey=SusNet_Project.

Dill, W. R. (1975). Public participation in corporate planning - Strategic management in a Kibitzer's World. *Long Range Planning, 8*(1), 57-63.

Donaldson, T., & Preston, L. E. (1995). The stakeholder theory of the corporation: Concepts, evidence and implications. *Academy of Management Review, 20*(1), 65-91.

Doorne, S. (2004). *Community intergrated tourism development in the South Pacific study*. Fiji, South Pacific: ICT Capacity Building at USP Project.

Durst, P., & Ingram, C. (1988). Nature-orientated tourism promotion by developing countries. *Tourism Management, 26*(1), 39-43.

Etzioni, A. (1964). *Modern organizations*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Fallon, L. D., & Kriwoken, L. K. (2003). Community involvement in tourism infrastructure: The case of the Strahan visitor centre, Tasmania. *Tourism Management, 24*(3), 289-308.

Fisher, J. (1993). *Thr road from Rio: Sustainable development and the non-governmental movement in the Third World*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Freeman, R. E. (1984). *Strategic management: A stakeholder approach*. Boston: Pitman.

Freeman, R. E., & Gilbert, D. R. (1987). Managing stakeholder relationships. In S. P. Sethi & C. M. Falbe (Eds.), *Business and society: Dimensions of conflict and cooperation* (pp. 397-423). Lexington: Lexington Books.

Getz, D., & Timur, S. (2005). Stakeholder involvement in sustainable tourism: Balancing the voices. In W. F. Theobal (Ed.), *Global tourism* (3rd ed., pp. 230-247). Maryland Heights: Butterworth-Heineman.

Godde, P. M., Price, M. F., & Zimmermann, F. M. (Eds.). (2000). *Tourism and development in mountain regions*. Oxon: CAB International.

Grimble, R., & Wellard, K. (1997). Stakeholder methodologies in natural resources management: A review of principles, contexts, experiences and opportunities. *Agricultural Systems, 55*(173-193).

Ham, S. H., & Weiler, B. (2002). Interpretation as the centrepiecs of sustainable wildlife tourism. In R. Harris, T. Griffin & P. Williams (Eds.), *Sustainable tourism: A global perspective* (pp. 35-44). Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Hardy, A. L., & Beeton, R. J. S. (2001). Sustainable tourism or maintainable tourism: Managing resources for more than average outcomes. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 9*(3), 168-192.

Huang, Y.-H., & Stewart, W. P. (1996). Rural tourism development: Shifting basis of community solidarity *Journal of Travel Research, 34*(4), 26-31.

Jackson, G., & Morpeth, N. (2000). Local Agenda 21: Reclaiming community ownership in tourism or stalled process? In G. Richards & D. Hall (Eds.), *Tourism and sustainable community development* (pp. 119-134). London: Routledge.

Jafari, J. (Ed.). (2000). *Encyclopedia of tourism*. London: Routledge.

Jamal, T., & Getz, D. (1995). Collaboration theory and community tourism planning. *Annals of Tourism Research, 22*(1), 186-204.

Jennings, G. (2001). *Tourism research* Milton, Qld. : John Wiley & Sons.

Kamamba, D. M. K. (2003). *The challenges of sustainable cultural heritage/community tourism*. Paper presented at the Second African Peace Though Tourism Conference.

Lane, B. (1994). Sustainable rural tourism strategies: A tool for development and conservation. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 2*(1-2), 102-111.

Leiper, N. (1995). *Tourism management*. Melbourne: RMIT Press.

Liburd, J. J. (2004). NGOs in tourism and preservation democratic accountability and sustainability in question. *Tourism Recreation Research, 29*(2), 105-110.

Lu, J., & Nepal, S. K. (2009). Sustainable tourism research: an analysis of papers published in the Journal of Sustainable Tourism. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 17*(1), 5-16.

Macbeth, J., Burns, G. L., Chandler, L., Revitt, M., & Veitch, S. (2002). *Community as tourism object: associated disciplinary understandings*. Paper presented at the CAUTHE conference.

Malhotra, N. (2004). *Marketing research: An applied orientation*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Manyara, G., & Jones, E. (2007). Community-based tourism enterprises development in Kenya: An exploration of their potential as avenues of poverty reduction. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 15*(6), 628-644.

Mowforth, M., & Munt, I. (2003). *Tourism and sustainability: New tourism in the third world* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.

Paskaleva-Shapira, K. (2007). New paradigms in city tourism management: Redefining destination promotion. *Journal of Tourism Research 46*(1), 108-114.

Pigram, J. J., & Wahab, S. (1997). Sustainable tourism in a changing world. In J. Pigram & S. Wahab (Eds.), *Tourism, development and growth: The challenge of sustainability* (pp. 17-32). London: Routledge.

Richins, M., & Root-Shaffer. (1988). The role of involvement and opinion leadership in consumer word-of-mouth. In M. Houston (Ed.), *Advances in consumer research* (Vol. 15, pp. 32-36). Provo, UT.: Association for Consumer Research.

Robson, J., & Robson, I. (1996). From shareholders to stakeholders: Critical issues for tourism marketers. *Tourism Management, 17*(7), 533-540.

Ruhanen, L. (2006). *Moving beyond the theory: Stakeholder perspectives of sustainable tourism*. Paper presented at the Cutting Edge Research in Tourism - New Directions, Challenges and Applications.

Sharpley, R., & Pearce, T. (2007). Tourism, marketing and sustainable development in the English National Parks: The role of national park authorities. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 15*(5), 557-573.

Swarbrooke, J. (2001). *Sustainable tourism management* (2rd ed.). London: CAB International.

Tosun, C. (2006). Expected nature of community participation in tourism development. *Tourism Management, 27*(3), 493-504.

Tourism Authority of Thailand. (1996). *Sustainable tourism development: Thai tourism vision 2001*. Bangkok: ESCAP Hall.

Tribe, J. (1999). *The developing curriculum*. Paper presented at the the NLG Annual Conference, University of Luton.

Vincent, D. R. (1990). *The information-based corporation-stakeholders economic and the technology investment*. Ilinois: Dow Jones-Irwin.

Wall, G. (1997). Sustainable tourism: Unsustainable development. In J. Pigram & S. Wahab (Eds.), *Tourism development and growth: The challenge of sustainability* (pp. 33-49). London: Routledge.

Weimann, G. (1991). The influentials: Back to the concept of opinion leaders? *Public Opinion Quarterly, 55*(2), 267-279.

Weimann, G. (1994). *The influentials: People who influence people*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Wheeler, B. (1991). Tourism's trouble times: Responsible tourism is not the answer. *Tourism Management, 12*(2), 91-96.

Wight, P. A. (2003). Supporting the principles of sustainable development in tourism and ecotourism: government's potential role. In M. Luck & T. Kirstges (Eds.), *Global ecotourism policies and case studies: perspectives and constraints* (pp. 50-72). Clevedon: Channel View Publications.

WTO. (1989). *Statement on responsible tourism*.

WTO. (1998). *Guide for local authorities on developing sustainable tourism*. Madrid: World Tourism Organization.

WTTC. (1995). *Agenda 21 for the travel & tourism industry: Towards environmentally sustainable development*. UK: WTTC.

Zeijl-Rozema, A. v., Cörvers, R., Kemp, R., & Martens, P. (2008). Governance for sustainable development: A franework. *Sustainable Development, 16*, 410-421.

Zhao, W., & Ritchie, J. R. (2007). Tourism and poverty alleviation: An integrative research framework. *Current Issues in Tourism, 10*(2&3), 119-143.