



Development of a conflict management model as a tool for improved project outcomes in community based tourism

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ABSTRACT

Community based tourism (CBT) offers many opportunities, however, conflict frequently occurs while developing CBT in communities around the world. Despite conflict limiting the potential of CBT, conflict management in CBT has not previously been systematically studied. To investigate conflict and conflict management during CBT, a linear model of conflict management was developed and subsequently tested through a three phase qualitative process: analysis of CBT literature, online international survey of 29 CBT stakeholders, and in-depth interviews of 23 CBT stakeholders. Results endorse the proposed linear model of 'conflict themes': an 'instance' of conflict, followed by a 'response', which results in an 'impact'. The rich data highlights the complexity involved, which was incorporated into the expanded model with three additional scenarios: 'new conflict develops', 'interrelated conflict themes', and 'simultaneous conflict themes'. The complete Conflict Management Model provides stakeholders with a tool to address conflict, thereby improving the outcomes of CBT.

1. Introduction

Community based tourism (CBT) is an alternative form of tourism development, intended to create and maximise opportunities and benefits for local community members. CBT can be defined as "tourism owned and/or managed by communities and intended to deliver wider community benefit, benefiting a wider group than those employed in the initiative" (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009, p. 4). CBT has been theorised, and in some communities, realised as an economic development initiative that also provides community members with a means to build capacity (Liu, 2006) and achieve empowerment (Dyer, Aberdeen, & Schuler, 2003). Asker, Boronyak, Carrard, and Paddon (2010) highlight positive economic, social, and environmental benefits if CBT is appropriately managed.

Other authors have highlighted CBT's potential as a promising community development application, with aims to empower community members and encourage their participation in the decision-making process, while disbursing the economic gains from tourism expenditure to community members and establishing self-sufficient communities (e.g. Choi & Sirakaya, 2005; Johnson, 2010; Mgonja, Sirima, Backman, & Backman, 2015). As a viable development option, CBT can provide economic benefits to local residents and assist in the development of traditional rural industries by promoting the host destination and providing tourists with cultural experiences while increasing their

environmental awareness (Lee, 2013). This potential may be realised if the inevitable conflict during CBT development is better understood and managed.

Although CBT can be advantageous for many communities, the literature reveals an ongoing discourse addressing the problems and negative outcomes affiliated with CBT. Some authors have criticised CBT as a concept (Blackstock, 2005), or stated there is little tangible evidence to support its benefit to livelihoods or the environment (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009). Ultimately there are numerous challenges in achieving the potential positive outcomes in real world communities. CBT occurs in both developed and developing countries, with developing countries often facing both a greater need for CBT and a greater magnitude of obstacles. Many communities that have adopted CBT for its potential positive livelihood impacts have faced challenges, such as inequitable distribution of benefits, poor leadership, or not receiving enough visitors to make them financially viable (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009; Simpson, 2008). These challenges are often the causes of conflict that limit the full potential of CBT being realised within the community.

In describing conflict, Rubin (1994, p. 33) recognises that "Conflict can arise in virtually any social setting, be it between or within individuals, groups, organisations, or nations. Such conflict can be managed in any of a number of possible ways." As part of the communication process, conflict occurs for two basic reasons; interpersonal differences and contradictory interests (Shetach, 2009). Specifically,

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Idrissou, van Paassen, Aarts, Vodouhè, and Leeuwis (2013, p. 73) contend that “Conflict is often defined as the incompatibility of ideas, beliefs, behaviours, roles, needs, desires, values, and so on among individuals.” In his seminal publication from the organisational behaviour literature, Thomas (1976, p. 265) explains conflict as “the process which begins when one party perceives that another has frustrated, or is about to frustrate, some concern of his.” The concept of conflict is not always destructive as constructive conflict can manifest through frustration, debate, and discussion, and can lead to increased understanding among collaborators, impact the collaboration between stakeholders, and ultimately secure a positive development outcome (Okazaki, 2008). Castro and Nielsen (2001, p. 229) also present conflictual situations as “neither positive nor negative but they can be used in a constructive or destructive way” and “as an opportunity for constructive change and growth.” Conflict management is conceptualised in this paper as the ongoing process of responding to identified instances of conflict.

Conflict and conflict management in CBT have not previously been systematically studied across a broad range of CBT examples. By understanding the conflict that inevitably occurs during CBT and improving the conflict management process, better outcomes can be achieved for the communities. This paper introduces a means to analyse conflict and proposes a Conflict Management Model that can be used as a tool to assist communities, and other CBT stakeholders and practitioners, to understand and manage conflict during the CBT process. Through understanding and recognising conflict, all stakeholders are able to prepare themselves for an ongoing process of conflict management and to plan appropriately to achieve more positive ‘impacts’ in ‘response’ to the conflict ‘instances’. The three terms ‘instances’, ‘responses’ and ‘impacts’, are collectively referred to as ‘conflict themes’ throughout this paper.

The literature review, presented in Section 2, identifies gaps in understanding and a lack of systematic analysis of conflict and conflict management in CBT. Section 3 presents the proposed Linear Progression Conflict Management Model which is then tested in this study. The methodology adopted for this study is described in Section 4, with results of the three phases of qualitative research presented in Section 5. Following the collection and analysis of primary and secondary data from CBT projects around the world, the initial model was expanded into the Conflict Management Model to reflect the complexity observed in the data, as described in Section 6. The development of the model offers both theoretical and practical contributions, and advice on using the model as a tool for conflict management is presented in Section 7, with conclusions in Section 8.

2. Conflict management in community based tourism

To explore conflict management in CBT, a comprehensive review of relevant literature was undertaken. First, conflict and conflict management in the social research and organisational behaviour literature were reviewed. Secondly, conflict and conflict management were reviewed within the general tourism literature. Finally, the review sought to identify CBT studies relevant to conflict and conflict management. This section includes highlights from the extensive literature review.

2.1. Conflict and conflict management

A number of conflict management models in the organisational behaviour literature and other literature were reviewed because “model-based interaction and analysis facilitate effective conflict management by enabling group members to surface and acknowledge the conflict, and deal with it constructively via open discussion rather than avoidance or competition” (Franco, Rouwette, & Korzilius, 2016, p. 878). The model and ideas of Thomas (1976; 1992) are still relevant to the current literature as a foundational source for new studies in various disciplines to build upon and test (e.g. Berg & Karlsen, 2012; Holt & DeVore, 2005). Thomas' (1992) five nodes of competition,

collaboration, compromise, avoidance, and accommodation represent five basic choices parties can make when faced with conflict. More recently, Franco et al. (2016) proposed a Need for Closure model, based on two tendencies, which are the urgency tendency that pursues closure as quickly as possible and the permanence tendency that seeks to maintain a position. The three step linear Need For Closure model demonstrates how the level of tendency influences the conflict management process, which then influences the decision quality (Franco et al., 2016). Some more complex models demonstrate interrelationships between the steps in conflict management. The concept of ‘trust’ as a moderating influence over conflict management is the basis of the model developed by Du, Ai, and Brugha (2011). This model is a linear, four step model with different levels of trust contributing to its complexity. A six step decision-making tool, incorporating feedback, to assist with the conservation conflicts related to depleting natural resources has been proposed by Young et al. (2016). Finally, a model developed by Savard, Howard, and Simon (2007) is representative of managing conflict in a community based learning setting, with a feature of the model being constant evaluation. Our review of conflict and conflict management in the general literature therefore found that the use of models, and particularly linear or step models, to conceptualise and assist conflict management was well established.

Literature on conflict and conflict management in relation to stakeholders and stakeholder analysis was also specifically reviewed (Castro & Nielsen, 2001; Grimble & Chan, 1995; Grimble & Wellard, 1997; Healey, 1998; Marshall, White, & Fisher, 2007; Reed, Graves, Dandy, Posthumus, Hubacek, Morris, Prell, Quinn, & Stringer, 2009; Sheppard & Meitner, 2005). Stakeholder analysis has historically been seen as a vital tool for strategic managers, which utilises different tools to assess interests, and is not based on any singular approach (Reed et al., 2009). The purpose of stakeholder analysis is to determine what factors and perspectives need to be considered when making a decision. Stakeholder analysis is an approach for understanding and making changes to a system and responding to multiple challenges (Grimble & Wellard, 1997).

We identified non-CBT literature addressing stakeholder conflicts during natural resource management (Castro & Nielsen, 2001; Grimble & Chan, 1995; Grimble & Wellard, 1997; Sheppard & Meitner, 2005). Conflicts between stakeholder groups over the management of wildlife are often complex and if management actions are to be understood and accepted by other stakeholders, then clarity on how management impacts “people's lives and elements of their culture, identity and relationships with the environment” should be defined and expressed (Marshall et al., 2007, p. 3131). According to Sheppard and Meitner (2005), public participation in development and resource management has experienced minimal success. They found that although in high demand, models which can aid in increasing public participation in the decision-making process have been limited (Sheppard & Meitner, 2005). Implications related to co-management agreements between indigenous populations, state agencies, and other stakeholders when dealing with natural resource conflicts were discussed by Castro and Nielsen (2001). Normative stakeholder analysis, emphasising stakeholder empowerment through involvement in the decision-making process and stakeholder groups establishing a shared understanding through consensus, is being adopted by natural resource managers (Reed et al., 2009). Stakeholder analysis “may also be particularly important for identifying existing conflicts between stakeholders, to ensure that these are not exacerbated by future work.” (Reed et al., 2009, p. 1936).

2.2. Conflict and conflict management in relation to tourism

Within the tourism literature, when the term conflict is used, it is often not defined (e.g. Beaumont & Dredge, 2009; Dowling, 1993; Jamal & Getz, 1995; Jamal, Stein, & Harper, 2002; McCool, 2009; Slocum, Backman, & Robinson, 2011). For example, Beaumont and

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