

STAKEHOLDERS' CONFLICTS IN TOURISM SETTING: THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, PERCEIVED BENEFIT, AND PERCEIVED COST

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ABSTRACT

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Conflict is an inherent aspect of social interactions that can lead to antagonistic behaviors and actions. In this study, the authors applied the theory of Extended Social Exchange and suggested a framework to examine factors affecting residents' tension with other tourism stakeholders. The authors employed a random sampling method to engage with 448 indigenous inhabitants residing in community-based tourism destinations in Vietnam. The findings illustrate that residents' perceptions of benefits and costs directly influence their conflicts with other groups. In addition, the community's involvement, to an extent, may affect residents' assessment of benefits and costs, thereby helping to manage conflicts. Nevertheless, resident involvement in tourism can result in conflicts with tourists due to differences in lifestyle, culture, and resource strain. Also, during their participation, residents may face tensions with local authorities due to overlapping responsibilities, lack of transparency, ineffective governance, and inconvenient administrative processes. The research supplements the theoretical understanding of conflict in a tourism context. Furthermore, this study provides local tourism practitioners with a comprehensive insight into stakeholders' tension, thereby promoting a reasonable orientation in tourism development strategy.

Keywords: Community involvement; residents' perception; perceived benefit; perceived cost; stakeholder conflict

1. INTRODUCTION

Community-based tourism (CBT) has emerged as a vital strategy for sustainable development in developing countries, leveraging natural and cultural heritage to transform these assets into significant economic benefits (Zielinski et al., 2021). However, each stakeholder defines "community" differently. Policymakers may emphasize administrative boundaries, while civil society representatives might focus on shared interests and cultural ties (Khartishvili et al., 2020). Tosun (2006) pointed out that stakeholders have

different interests, engage in varying forms of participation, and frequently conflict with one another. These tensions contribute to the breakdown of relationships among involved parties, and complexities of stakeholder relationships in tourism development reflect conflicts among residents, government entities, and tourism enterprises (Wang & Yotsumoto, 2019). Extant research on CBT also indicates that in every tourism destination, conflict along with instability and unsustainability are complex issues that need to be more thoroughly studied (e.g. Andereck et al., 2005; Okazaki, 2008; Tosun, 2006; Choi & Murray, 2010).

Recent studies have further demonstrated that conflicts between stakeholders can escalate into hostile behaviors and actions, ultimately tarnishing the destination's image and obstructing the growth of the tourism industry (Ebrahimi & Khalifah, 2014; Zhu & Siriphon, 2019; Wang & Yotsumoto, 2019). Stakeholders' conflict may prevent resource integration, lead to resource waste, disrupt tourism management attempts, and reduce associated benefits (Apostolidis & Brown, 2022; Canavan, 2017; Yang et al., 2013), thus, creating barriers to community tourism projects (Lo & Janta, 2020; Wang, 2021). According to Apostolidis and Brown (2022), effective conflict management strategies are essential to avoid value loss, promote collaboration and integrate resources, which can support achieving the United Nations' sustainable development goals for tourism. Regarding the issue of conflict management, many studies suggest that the most appropriate approach is to analyze the antecedents of conflict (Schnegg & Kiaka, 2018; Susskind & Thomas-Larmer, 1999).

Enhancing engagement is a crucial strategy for mitigating stakeholder conflict (Bhalla et al., 2016; Connor & Gyan, 2022). Many other studies also show a correlation between residents' participation and their attitudes or behaviors (Feti et al., 2020; Hlengwa & Mazibuko, 2018; Nugroho & Numata, 2020). However, when residents and stakeholders are involved in tourism management (co-management model), it can create new conflicts or worsen old ones (Castro & Nielsen, 2001). Thus, additional studies are needed to verify the influence of residents' participation on conflict between stakeholders.

Likewise, a majority of research has been done based on Social Exchange Theory—a solid, appropriate, and most frequently applied theoretical framework to assess and explain stakeholders' perceptions, attitudes, and behavior—to test the correlation between residents' perception of benefits and costs with their attitudes and behavior (Gan, 2020; Nunkoo & So, 2016; Sharpley, 2014; Wang, 2021). Nicholas et al. (2009) emphasized the significance of locals' awareness and attitudes toward tourism, considering them as crucial factors shaping their behavior towards tourists. Perceived benefits, such as economic benefits, community unity, and cultural and environmental protection positively impact residents' support for tourism (Choi & Sirakaya, 2005; Gan, 2020; Nugroho & Numata, 2020; Sharpley, 2014), whereas perceived costs, including economic burdens, social disruption, cultural erosion, and environmental degradation, can lead to resistance and conflict among stakeholders at tourism destinations (Mannon & Glass-Coffin, 2019; Sitikarn, 2008). However, only a few empirical studies have demonstrated the correlation between these latent variables, especially in tourism settings. This one-sided approach fails to understand the dyadic nature of social exchange, in which benefits and costs influence perceptions simultaneously to affect residents' overall attitudes and behavior.

This paper attempts to fill the above gaps by empirically investigating mountainous tourism destinations in Vietnam, particularly in Thanh Hoa. This province, characterized by rapid tourism industry growth, is strategically targeted by the government as one of Vietnam's four primary regional growth hubs in the north of Vietnam. However, the rapid development has also introduced significant challenges, resulting in conflicts among diverse stakeholders (Minh Hai, 2017; Vu Lan, 2022). This study examines how antecedent factors, including resident involvement and residents' perceptions of benefits and costs, influence conflicts between residents and other stakeholders, specifically: a) How does community involvement in tourism development influence residents' perceptions of benefits and costs associated with tourism? b) How do perceived benefits and costs of tourism development affect the nature and intensity of conflicts between residents and tourists, tourism enterprises, and local government authorities? Based on these findings, the research will offer policy recommendations for tourism planners and managers to effectively manage and mitigate conflicts at tourist destinations, contributing to sustainable development.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A stakeholder is any group/individual that can impact or be impacted by achieving an organization's goals (Freeman, 1984). Tourism is an integrated economic sector that affects various parties. The four essential stakeholders playing a key role in coordinating tourism activities at each destination are residents, tourists, tourism businesses, and local authorities (Hoa, 2013; Thanh et al., 2022). Each stakeholder plays a critical role in shaping the development of a destination. In the interaction process, these groups may both cooperate and compete with each other. With diverse research methods, researchers have illustrated the conflicts between residents and all stakeholders. With particular objects, values, and interests, the groups compete on different issues.

Conflict is a phenomenon that emerges when one party notices that the other has bothered or is likely to bother them (Thomas, 1976). Conflict may occur on different levels: intrapersonal, interpersonal, intra-group, and intergroup (Guo & Jordan, 2021; Jehn, 1995). In this article, the authors examine intergroup conflict between residents and three other parties: tourists, tourism businesses, and local authorities.

2.1 Resident-tourist conflicts

The incompatible relationship between residents and tourists typically emerged from the stage of exploration and involvement. Based on Coser's model of social conflict, Yang et al. (2013) revealed that strangers suddenly came in the first stage, and the locals could not understand the behavior and lifestyle of visitors, leading to challenges in adapting to the changing social environment. Shen et al. (2017) indicated that visitors' negative behavior (such as making noise, eating and drinking in public places, negligence in personal hygiene, or pushing or cutting in line) led to negative impressions and made residents indignant with tourists. Tsaur et al. (2018) synthesized indicators of cultural and social conflicts between residents and visitors, including differences in living habits, concepts of morality, social norms, behavior, and communication. They are also concerned about the change in traditional values and social structure due to the arrival of visitors. Besides socio-cultural conflicts, residents clash with tourists over resources and natural environment issues. Residents assume that the presence of tourists affects their access to and use of local resources. Visitors, transportation, and public facilities occupy crowded recreation spaces, and government policies are partial toward tourists over the interests of residents (Tsaur et al., 2018). Through observation and in-depth interview methodology, Kim and Kang (2020) unveiled the anti-visitor attitude of locals as negative impacts from tourism have been uncontrolled. Visitors invaded the family privacy space. Restaurants and souvenir shops displaced local grocery markets. Housing prices and real estate sharply increased and placed a burden on families who were renting a house.

2.2 Resident-tourism enterprise conflicts

Residents have disputes with tourism businesses across cultural, social, economic, and environmental dimensions. Firstly, criticism has arisen towards tourism enterprises for collaborating with authorities to seize and regulate vital resources, particularly land. The locals found themselves unable to express their voices as the tourism industry, supported by the local government, reaped the majority of benefits from utilizing local resources (Engström & Boluk, 2012). According to Xue and Kerstetter (2018), although these two entities have a common development objective, they exhibit disparities in values, attitudes, and interests. Residents expressed frustration with tourism enterprises, as the investors collaborated with the authorities to exploit power and monopolize most community resources. Similarly, Lo and Janta (2020) verified that tourism growth might evoke disputes between residents and investors regarding the ownership of resources. Residents indicated that their important lands had fallen into the hands of external developers. Tourism enterprises face scrutiny for their contribution to environmental pollution and the degradation of natural landscapes. Challenges such as air pollution, water pollution, noise, and resource degradation frustrated residents, especially non-participants (Ebrahimi & Khalifah, 2014). In addition, locals were threatened by infringement during the construction process, disrupting and ruining the natural scenery (Kreiner et al., 2015). Many residents expressed dissatisfaction regarding economics, asserting that tourism predominantly favors businesses, with limited economic benefits reaching the local populace (Zhu & Siriphon, 2019; Lo & Janta, 2020; Sitikarn, 2008). Other studies pointed out that the tourism industry has led to the erosion of indigenous cultural heritage and a decline in community solidarity (Kinseng et al., 2018; Xue & Kerstetter, 2018).

2.3 Resident-government conflicts

The loss of employment and business opportunities raises discontent between residents and local government. Residents claimed that the authorities cooperated with tourism enterprises to exploit the community's properties for profit but did not share the benefits with residents (Wang & Yotsumoto, 2019). Some others stated that the limited benefits received from tourism did not compensate for the costs they experienced; as a result, many residents had to leave the village and be replaced by new immigrants who came for the tourism business (Kim & Kang, 2020). The government often prohibited local vending at tourist destinations to maintain attractiveness. To defend their rights, the residents sometimes responded with protest actions, such as conducting traffic obstruction, closing the gates, and disallowing tourists to enter their village (Wang & Yotsumoto, 2019). Other studies mentioned conflicts between residents and local authorities due to the government's faults and lack of transparency in the management, causing negative impacts on local resources and the living environment (Burgoyne et al., 2017; Dredge, 2010; Kreiner et al., 2015). Zhu and Siriphon (2019) and Wang and Yotsumoto (2019) concluded that the local government is the most opposed group of residents.

2.4 The conceptual framework and hypothesis development

1. Perception of benefits and costs

Perceived benefit and perceived cost are two main components of SET applied to assess residents' attitudes and behavior in numerous studies. Many authors like Jurowski and Gursoy (2004), Choi and Sirakaya (2005), Sharpley (2014), Gan (2020), and Nugroho and Numata (2020) concurred that residents will be more supportive of the tourism industry in their locality if they perceive the benefits outweigh the risks and costs; on the contrary, when they see more disadvantages than benefits, they may indicate a hostile attitude. Other studies have directly noted that the drawbacks of tourism play a significant role in fueling disputes at various destinations (Mannon & Glass-Coffin, 2019; Sitikarn, 2008). McCool (2009) noted that discord emerges as residents become aware of adverse impacts on their living surroundings and alter cultural values caused by promoting the tourism industry. Improper utilization and depletion of resources are also essential roots leading to conflicts within the tourism sector (Liu et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2015). Thanh et al. (2022) asserted that if residents do not derive advantages from tourism, their reactions toward tourism suppliers and tourists will be unfavorable. Accordingly, subsequent hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Perceived benefit has a direct and adverse impact on conflicts between residents and other stakeholders.

H1a: Perceived benefit has a direct and adverse impact on residents-tourist conflicts.

H1b: Perceived benefit has a direct and adverse impact on residents-tourism enterprise conflicts.

H1c: Perceived benefit has a direct and adverse impact on residents-local government conflicts.

H2: Perceived cost has a direct and positive impact on conflicts between residents and other stakeholders.

H2a: Perceived cost has a direct and positive impact on residents-tourist conflicts.

H2b: Perceived cost has a direct and positive impact on residents-tourism enterprise conflicts.

H2c: Perceived cost has a direct and positive impact on residents-local government conflicts.

2. Community involvement

Although SET has been popularly used to investigate residents' attitudes and behavior, Lee (2013) and Nugroho and Numata (2020) argued that the original SET fails to examine how residents perceive the benefits and costs of tourism development within particular contexts. Therefore, they proposed an extended SET that considered antecedent factors (including community involvement) that affect perceived benefit and cost. Nugroho and Numata (2020) proved that residents' perception of cost and benefits mediate between residents' involvement and supporting attitude toward tourism development in a national park. The importance of community involvement in tourism development has been widely acknowledged in prior studies (e.g. Lee, 2013; Nugroho & Numata, 2020; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2015). Tosun (2006) pointed out that community involvement may affect residents' perception of tourism's potential impacts and enhance their awareness of local culture and values. Thus, subsequent hypotheses are suggested:

H3: Perceived benefits mediate the inverse correlation between community involvement and conflicts between residents and other stakeholders.

H3a: Perceived benefits mediate the inverse correlation between community involvement and conflicts between residents and tourists.

H3b: Perceived benefits mediate the inverse correlation between community involvement and conflicts between residents and tourism enterprises.

H3c: Perceived benefits mediate the inverse correlation between community involvement and conflicts between residents and local government.

H4: Perceived costs mediate the positive correlation between community involvement and conflicts between residents and other stakeholders.

H4a: Perceived costs mediate the positive correlation between community involvement and conflicts between residents and tourists.

H4b: Perceived costs mediate the positive correlation between community involvement and conflicts between residents and tourism enterprises.

H4c: Perceived costs mediate the positive correlation between community involvement and conflicts between residents and local government.

In the bargain, community involvement in various studies served as an antecedent factor that directly affects residents' attitudes and behavior. Hardy et al. (2002) claim that fewer conflicts arise when the hosts are more involved in tourism development; furthermore, their support for tourism development may be boosted. Similarly, some scholars like Butler (1980) and Prosser (1994) noted that resentment, antagonism, and disaffection between host communities and foreign tourism investors emerged when local communities were excluded from the tourism industry. Studies also acknowledged that community involvement in destination management and decision-making might raise people's awareness, respect, and understanding of natural

preservation and incentivize the community to integrate the tourism industry into the local economy (Aas et al., 2005; Simmons, 1994). According to Bhalla et al. (2016) and Bello et al. (2017), it is necessary to encourage residents to participate in cultural and ecological conservation activities to create a positive attitude. Nugroho and Numata (2020) presented findings in a recent study, indicating that the increased resident participation in tourism correlates with greater support for tourism development. Maximizing residents' participation is one of the strategies that many researchers propose to resolve conflicts. When residents' participation is limited by intensive government intervention, conflicts will arise at the destination (Feti et al., 2020). If residents are involved in resource management, their conflict with the government will be reduced (Feng & Li, 2020). Accordingly, the authors proposed a co-management model to restrain conflict between these two groups. Ernawati et al. (2018) also argued that promoting community participation in tourism management resolves long-standing conflicts between residents and local authorities. Similarly, Fan et al. (2019) stated that to reduce conflicts, the locals need to be more involved in the land acquisition process, and the information needs to be transparent and clear. In the words of Lo and Janta (2020), residents must be empowered in programs for preserving culture and resources. Therefore, the following research hypotheses were presented:

H5: Community involvement has a direct and adverse impact on conflicts between residents and other stakeholders.

H5a: Community involvement has a direct and adverse impact on residents-tourist conflicts.

H5b: Community involvement has a direct and adverse impact on residents-tourism enterprise conflicts.

H5c: Community involvement has a direct and adverse impact on residents-local government conflicts.

All hypotheses are summarized in Figure 1.

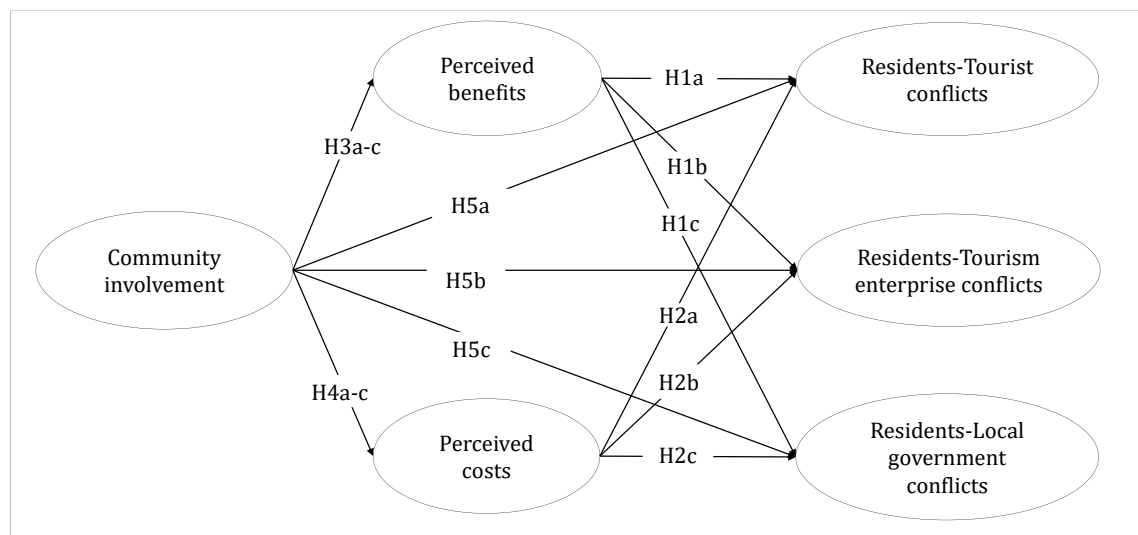


Figure 1: Research framework

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study sites

This study is conducted at mountainous community-based tourism destinations in Thanh Hoa province, Vietnam. Specifically, six destinations representing distinct stages of the tourism area life cycle were selected. These places have attracted thousands of tourists (both domestic and foreign) since the early 2000s. Tourism benefits the locals, especially in economics; however, there are typical tensions between residents and other stakeholders.

3.2 Measurement

The authors employ the scale of community involvement with four components, developed by Lee (2013) and Nugroho and Numata (2020). Perceived benefit (11 variables) and perceived cost (7 variables) were adapted from the scale of Gursoy and Rutherford (2004). The resident-tourist conflict concept is modified from the scale developed and verified by Tsaur et al. (2018). The scale initially included 13 items. Three of them were excluded during two pilot tests as the factor loading threshold was not satisfied. The authors developed two concepts, resident-tourism enterprise conflict and resident-local government conflict, based on the four-

step process proposed by Churchill (1979). The method includes (1) Generating a variable pool (through in-depth interviews and systematic review); (2) Collecting data and purifying the measurements; (3) Recollecting data and reevaluating measurements; and (4) Confirming the scale. After this procedure, the authors obtained 6 and 5 items for the constructs of resident-tourism enterprise conflict and resident-local government conflicts, respectively. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to analyze the proposed research model. The PLS-SEM is utilized since the study aims to predict and extend Social Exchange Theory by examining the complex relationships between community involvement and stakeholder conflicts. According to Hair et al. (2017), PLS-SEM is suitable for predictive and exploratory research. It is also appropriate in the context of this study, which develops new measurement scales to assess conflicts between residents and tourism enterprises, as well as between residents and government authorities. Therefore, a flexible analytical approach is required to validate newly established latent constructs (Chin, 1998). In addition, PLS-SEM can handle relatively small samples and does not require strict multivariate normality assumptions, ensuring robust estimates for complex structural models (Henseler et al., 2009).

3.3 Sample size and data collection

There are multiple ways to calculate the minimum sample size for a study. This study applies Yamane's (1967) calculation formula based on the population size. According to Thanh Hoa Provincial Statistics Office (2020), the population size in Thanh Hoa province's mountainous districts is 928,229. If the sample is homogeneous, the error is 5% (corresponding to the confidence level of 95%), the sample size must be 400. Neuman (2014) declared that the response rate usually reaches 90% if a face-to-face survey is conducted. Thus, the authors use random and probability selection to approach 450 residents in person.

Participants were briefed on the survey's objective and asked to indicate their willingness to respond. If they consented, respondents could complete the questionnaire independently, or the investigator could assist them in reading it. The investigation yielded a total of 448 valid responses. The respondent profile revealed that 62.9% were male and 37.1% were female. Regarding age distribution, 29.5% of respondents were between 18 and 24 years old, 30.6% were aged 25 to 40, 29.9% were between 41 and 55, and the remaining respondents were over 55. The respondents who graduated from primary, secondary, high school, and above were 17.4%, 34.4%, 36.4%, and 7.4%, respectively. The rest were unschooled. Most participants have resided in the area for over two decades (84.4%).

4. RESULTS

4.1 Measurement validation

In response to the issue of convergent validity, the authors examined the items' outer loadings, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE). As indicated in Table 1 and Figure 2, the outer loadings for all questionnaire items, excluding PB4, PB6, and PC1, surpass the 0.7 threshold. Additionally, values of both CR and AVE exceed their respective thresholds of 0.7 and 0.5 (Chin, 1998). Thus, the convergent validity of all latent variables is supported. Regarding the discriminant validity, the correlation coefficient between any two constructs was surpassed by the square root of the AVE of each construct, following the recommended criteria for establishing discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). All factors (listed in Table 1) exhibit Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) coefficients below 5, thus meeting the acceptance criteria (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 1: Measurement properties results

Construct/Items	Outer loading (>0.7)	CR (>0.6)	AVE (>0.5)	VIF (<5)
Community involvement		<i>0.917</i>	<i>0.736</i>	
CI1	0.834			2.123
CI2	0.882			2.514
CI3	0.875			2.519
CI4	0.839			2.236
Perceived benefit		<i>0.923</i>	<i>0.524</i>	
PB1	0.758			1.976
PB2	0.775			2.631
PB3	0.761			2.557
PB4	0.469			1.373
PB5	0.733			2.472

Table 1: Measurement properties results (continued)

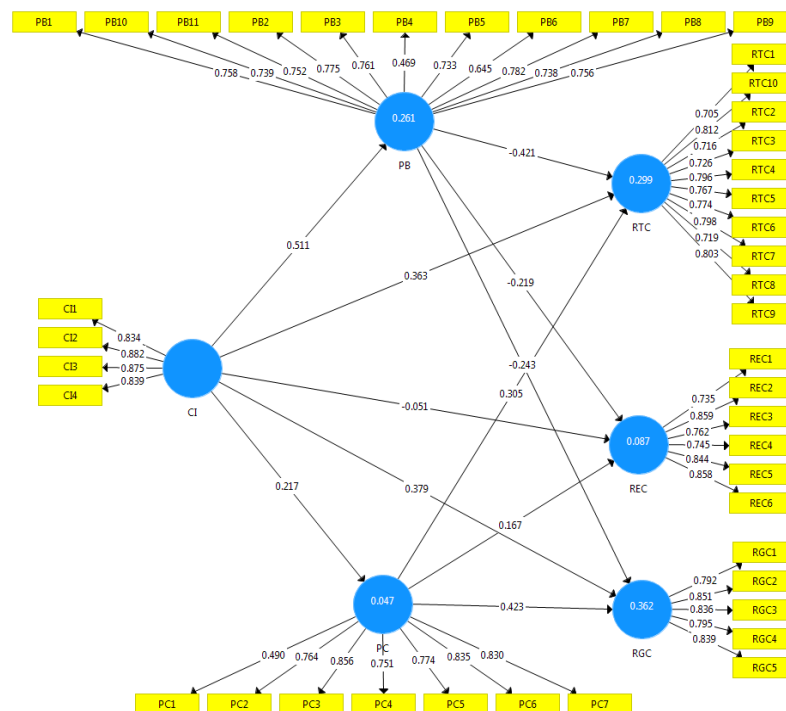
Construct/Items	Outer loading (>0.7)	CR (>0.6)	AVE (>0.5)	VIF (<5)
PB6	0.645			1.846
PB7	0.782			3.38
PB8	0.738			2.888
PB9	0.756			1.943
PB10	0.739			2.699
PB11	0.752			2.644
Perceived cost		<i>0.907</i>	<i>0.586</i>	
PC1	0.490			1.545
PC2	0.764			2.332
PC3	0.856			2.785
PC4	0.751			2.019
PC5	0.774			1.895
PC6	0.835			2.387
PC7	0.830			2.326
Residents-tourist conflicts		<i>0.933</i>	<i>0.582</i>	
RTC1	0.705			1.687
RTC2	0.716			1.833
RTC3	0.726			1.844
RTC4	0.796			2.72
RTC5	0.767			2.306
RTC6	0.774			2.512
RTC7	0.798			3.235
RTC8	0.719			1.906
RTC9	0.803			2.556
RTC10	0.812			3.442
Residents-tourism enterprises conflicts		<i>0.915</i>	<i>0.644</i>	
REC1	0.735			1.828
REC2	0.859			2.29
REC3	0.762			1.892
REC4	0.745			1.782
REC5	0.844			2.455
REC6	0.858			2.598
Residents-local government conflicts		<i>0.913</i>	<i>0.677</i>	
RGC1	0.792			1.904
RGC2	0.851			2.473
RGC3	0.836			2.339
RGC4	0.795			2.144
RGC5	0.839			2.282

4.2 Hypothesis testing

Bootstrapping using SmartPLS recommended by Chin (2010) was employed to evaluate the hypotheses. In this approach, we have analyzed 5,000 resamples containing 448 instances (Henseler et al., 2009). The entire results are presented in Table 2: 12 hypotheses in this study are supported while the other three are not. In particular, H5b (Community involvement negatively affects residents-tourism enterprises conflict) is rejected due to the test values (Figure 2) being unsatisfactory (T-value < 1.96, P-value > 0.05) (Chin, 2010). H5a (Community involvement negatively affects resident-tourist conflicts) and H5c (Community involvement negatively affects residents-local authorities conflict) are rejected as the estimated impact is positive instead of negative. This means that the more residents participate in tourism, the more conflicts arise between tourists and local authorities.

Table 2: Findings from the Structural Path Model

Hypothesis	Estimate	T-value	P-Value	Conclusion
H1a: Perceived benefit → Residents-tourist conflicts	-0.421	7.779	0.000	Supported
H1b: Perceived benefit → Residents-tourism enterprise conflicts	-0.219	4.095	0.000	Supported
H1c: Perceived benefit → Residents-local government conflicts	-0.243	3.98	0.000	Supported
H2a: Perceived cost → Residents-tourist conflicts	0.305	6.328	0.000	Supported
H2b: Perceived cost → Residents-tourism enterprise conflicts	0.167	2.980	0.003	Supported
H2c: Perceived cost → Residents-local government conflicts	0.423	9.779	0.000	Supported
H3a: Community involvement → Perceived benefits → Residents-tourist conflicts	-0.215	6.138	0.000	Supported
H3b: Community involvement → Perceived benefits → Residents-tourism enterprise conflicts	-0.112	3.766	0.000	Supported
H3c: Community involvement → Perceived benefits → Residents-local government conflicts	-0.124	3.751	0.000	Supported
H4a: Community involvement → Perceived costs → Residents-tourist conflicts	0.066	3.411	0.001	Supported
H4b: Community involvement → Perceived costs → Residents-tourism enterprise conflicts	0.036	2.415	0.016	Supported
H4c: Community involvement → Perceived costs → Residents-local government conflicts	0.092	3.896	0.000	Supported
H5a: Community involvement → Residents-tourist conflict	0.363	7.444	0.000	Rejected
H5b: Community involvement → Residents-tourism enterprise conflicts	-0.051	0.816	0.415	Rejected
H5c: Community involvement → Resident-local government conflicts	0.379	8.423	0.000	Rejected

**Figure 2:** Measurement model test results

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 The influence of perceived benefit, perceived cost on stakeholders' conflict

Based on social exchange theory and its extended version, various studies have highlighted the influence of perceived benefits, perceived costs, as well as community involvement on residents' attitudes and behaviors (Gan, 2020; Ko & Stewart, 2002; Nugroho & Numata, 2020). Research indicates that residents are more inclined to support tourism and its stakeholders when they perceive substantial benefits. Conversely, perceptions of greater harm often lead to opposing attitudes and behaviors. Similarly, studies suggest that resident engagement in tourism tends to enhance perceived benefits, particularly economic, while mitigating

negative impacts, thereby reducing conflicts with tourism businesses. The findings of this study align with previous research, confirming that greater perceived benefits from tourism ensure a lower likelihood of stakeholder conflict. The impact coefficients between perceived benefits and conflicts between residents and tourists, tourism businesses, and local authorities are -0.421, -0.219, and -0.243, respectively. Conversely, when residents perceive more losses than benefits, their opposition to these groups increases. The corresponding impact coefficients for these groups are +0.305, +0.167, and +0.423, respectively. These results support hypotheses H1a, H1b, H1c, H2a, H2b, and H2c.

Therefore, to reduce intergroup conflicts, tourism authorities, in Thanh Hoa and other tourist destinations in general, should focus on improving residents' perceptions of tourism benefits and fostering mutual appreciation. Facilitating open dialogues among stakeholders can promote understanding of shared aspirations and support the development of collaborative, mutually beneficial solutions. Residents and tourism businesses should establish a clear framework for cooperation and equitable revenue sharing. Local residents can contribute to preserving natural landscapes, traditional occupations, and cultural practices. These elements contribute to creating an attractive image for tourists. In return, tourism businesses that benefit from local cultural resources should share profits with communities. They should also invest in improving residents' quality of life, preserving cultural traditions and festivals, restoring historical sites, and protecting the natural environment. In addition, businesses must adhere to environmental protection regulations, offer training, and provide employment opportunities with fair wages to local labor. Residents express dissatisfaction with local authorities over overlapping responsibilities, a lack of transparency in management, and redundant administrative procedures. To minimize conflicts, local governments should establish clear and effective power structures, clearly defining the roles of various levels of government. Government bodies responsible for planning development strategies and attracting investment must prioritize the community's quality of life, ensuring that the interests of the residents come first. Additionally, if localities impose tourist fees, they must propose a fair revenue-sharing mechanism. When residents receive even a small economic benefit from tourism, it can foster a stronger relationship between them and local authorities, which will promote cooperation, reduce illegal activities, and encourage community involvement in environmental preservation (Archabald & Naughton-Treves, 2001).

Stakeholders may also engage a third-party mediator or coordinator to gain a deeper understanding of the interests and desires of all involved parties, as the intermediaries have the potential to transform destructive conflicts into constructive ones (Ashley & Jones, 2001; Jamal & Getz, 1995, 1999). The mediator can offer cooperation proposals that are mutually beneficial for both sides, as recommended by Rubin (1994). Tourism businesses (which serve as a bridge between tourists and local communities) along with local governments (which link businesses, tourism companies, and communities) are ideally positioned to play this crucial role. They facilitate stakeholder communication and collaboration, fostering mutual understanding, positive perceptions, and consensus-building. This process enhances cooperation among various groups and lays the foundation for future alliances. Additionally, local authorities may consult with experts, seek advice from non-governmental organizations, or collaborate with governmental bodies to establish a cooperative framework that best serves all parties involved. These efforts will promote respectful relationships, empower stakeholders, and uplift community members and their representatives.

In addition, each locality needs to establish clear, consistent regulations (code of conduct for tourism) and enforce compliance across all stakeholders. For instance, tourists should be encouraged to respect local cultural differences and sacred sites, ensuring they do not infringe on community values. Administrative sanctions for violations may be imposed as per the recommendations of Needham et al. (2017). Authorities can designate specific zones where tourists can visit and engage with the destination comfortably while keeping restricted areas for residents, thus minimizing the impact of tourism on daily life. Cultural exchange activities between tourists and locals can foster mutual understanding and strengthen connections between the two groups. Furthermore, local authorities must assess the capacity of each destination to accommodate visitors, preventing overcrowding and ensuring that local resources can support demand.

5.2 The impact of community involvement and stakeholder's conflict

As numerous studies have suggested, a key strategy to mitigate stakeholder conflicts is to maximize resident participation in tourism activities. Active involvement in tourism, including participation in services, business operations, resource management, and planning, tends to increase the economic benefits for residents. As a result, they are more likely to overlook the negative impacts of tourism, which in turn diminishes the level of conflict with tourism businesses (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; Lee, 2013; Nugroho & Numata, 2020). In contrast, when residents are excluded from tourism participation, they often exhibit indifference toward tourists or resent fellow residents who benefit from the economic advantages brought by tourism (Ebrahimi & Khalifah, 2014). However, the survey findings in this study indicate that as residents participate more in tourism, the likelihood of conflicts with both tourists and local authorities increases, with impact coefficients

(β) of +0.363 and +0.379, respectively. The rising interactions between residents and tourists accentuate differences in lifestyle, beliefs, ethics, and social norms, leading to increased conflicts. Furthermore, as the volume of tourists increases, overcrowding, traffic congestion, and environmental degradation contribute to declining residents' tolerance towards visitors, as explained in the Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) model by Butler (1980). The increased participation also leads to frequent interactions between residents and management personnel. These interactions may, however, expose issues such as cumbersome administrative procedures and the professional shortcomings of certain managers, potentially fueling disagreements and dissatisfaction.

Conversely, residents' participation can partially mitigate conflicts between residents and tourism businesses ($\beta = -0.051$). When residents engage with tourism businesses through employment or other forms of participation, they derive economic benefits, which helps reduce conflicts. However, residents directly involved in tourism, either through business ownership or management, may experience conflicts with other tourism enterprises, leading to inconsistent responses among participants. As a result, the test values fail to meet the required threshold (P -value = 0.415). Furthermore, participation in tourism can influence residents' perceptions, which may alleviate or exacerbate conflicts between residents and other stakeholders. The study results confirm that H3a, H3b, H3c, and H4a, H4b, H4c are all supported. Nevertheless, the specific indirect impacts of community involvement on stakeholders' conflict through perceived cost are not significant.

Accordingly, the research findings affirm the arguments and warnings that Castro and Nielsen (2001) raised regarding the co-management model in tourism. Encouraging residents' participation in tourism is crucial for achieving sustainable development goals, as it enhances the quality of life and fosters greater awareness among the community. However, promoting participation without clear regulations and management frameworks can create or worsen conflicts between residents and stakeholders. Authorities must establish fair power structures, define stakeholder responsibilities, and uphold residents' rights. Providing transparent and clear information sharing is also vital.

6. CONCLUSION

Tourism is a multifaceted economic sector involving various stakeholders, each of whom plays a crucial role in the sustainability and growth of a destination. Interactions among these stakeholders are characterized by both cooperation and inherent conflicts. Perceived benefit and perceived cost are key elements influencing the relationships between residents and other tourism-related parties. When residents perceive tourism as bringing more harm and risk to their community, conflicts with tourists, businesses, and local authorities increase. Conversely, a positive perception of tourism can reduce the potential for such conflicts. Thus, to mitigate stakeholder conflicts, authorities should strengthen residents' perceived benefits from tourism while fostering a shared recognition of the importance and value of each stakeholder group.

Community involvement is a fundamental aspect of community-based tourism, serving as the foundation for the sustainable development of tourism destinations. Residents' participation influences their awareness of tourism's impact and is critical in shaping conflict dynamics between locals and other stakeholders. When residents engage in tourism, directly or indirectly, they gain a wide array of benefits. These benefits include economic gains like income generation, job creation, and entrepreneurial opportunities, as well as non-economic advantages such as cultural enrichment, social cohesion, and improved living conditions. Such benefits significantly enhance the quality of life, especially in remote or mountainous areas. However, the findings highlight the dual role of community involvement in tourism development. Despite the opportunities created by tourism, residents often encounter challenges in their interactions with tourism management authorities. These challenges may include management overlaps, lack of transparency, inefficiencies in governance, and cumbersome administrative procedures, which may generate new conflicts. These findings suggest that community involvement alone does not automatically reduce stakeholder conflicts. Rather, the fairness, transparency, and effectiveness of governance structures determine whether participation leads to cooperation or conflict.

6.1 Theoretical implications

Firstly, by applying an original theoretical framework widely used in social research (Social Exchange Theory) and its extended version, the study has demonstrated how residents' perceptions of benefits and costs influence conflicts between residents and related parties. The indirect correlation between community involvement and stakeholder conflict through perceived benefit and perceived cost is also confirmed. This integrated approach extends SET by illustrating reciprocal exchanges between residents and other stakeholders, while also contributing to stakeholder theory by highlighting the importance of inclusive participation in mitigating conflicts. This result may be useful for future studies on residents' attitudes and

conflict issues, especially in tourism. Secondly, based on the research process proposed by Churchill (1979), the paper has developed a scale measuring the tensions between residents and other stakeholders, allowing for more insights into how these tensions influence community attitudes and behaviors. These components can be adopted in future studies.

6.2 Practical implications

The findings have implications for tourism planners and managers. Firstly, the article has identified the existing tensions between community members and other stakeholders at tourist sites in the mountainous region of Thanh Hoa, Vietnam. Specifically, tensions between residents and tourists are driven by differences in lifestyles and the adverse effects that tourists have on the socio-cultural and natural environments. Conflicts between residents and tourism enterprises primarily revolve around distributing economic benefits. Furthermore, management policies and transparency issues contribute to conflicts between communities and authorities. Secondly, the study highlights key drivers of stakeholder conflicts, thereby offering valuable insights for stakeholders. Accordingly, antecedent factors, including community perceptions and involvement, should carefully be considered. Localities seeking to develop community-based tourism should consider establishing a Community-Based Tourism Destination Management Board. This board should include representatives from local authorities, residents, and tourism enterprises. Its main responsibilities are to develop management regulations, support and monitor tourism activities, and coordinate cooperation among stakeholders in investment, resource use, and tourism product development. A clear governance mechanism defining stakeholders' rights, responsibilities, and transparency is essential. In addition, the management board should collaborate with residents to establish a tourism benefit-sharing mechanism. This mechanism should ensure that communities receive fair benefits from tourism activities. Tourism revenue can be allocated in two main ways. Part of the revenue should be distributed directly to households providing tourism services. Another portion should contribute to a community development fund. This fund can support infrastructure improvement, cultural preservation, environmental protection, and social welfare programs. Furthermore, education initiatives for stakeholders, particularly residents, should be enhanced to highlight the benefits of the tourism industry. These efforts also promote cultural exchange and mutual understanding. Establishing and implementing a code of conduct for all tourism stakeholders is also essential for promoting harmonious and sustainable relationships.

6.3 Limitations and future research

Firstly, as stated by Gursoy and Rutherford (2004), perceived benefits and costs are classified into different groups: cultural benefits/costs, social benefits/costs, and economic benefits. The conflicts between residents and other parties can be categorized into diverse types: cultural conflict, social conflict, resource conflict, and economic conflict. The impact of different perceptions on various kinds of conflicts between residents and other parties may not be the same. However, this study did not consider this issue. Secondly, the destination has different tourism business models: citizen-owned, jointly owned, and non-citizen-owned. The level of conflict between residents and these kinds of business models may be varied. The host may have less of a tendency to conflict with the citizen-owned business and their long-standing neighbors. Another limitation is that the survey was conducted at CBT destinations in Vietnam at the beginning stages (exploration, involvement, and development). The results may vary in other localities and contexts (such as in metropolitan and coastal areas), or in other developed countries around the world, with different economic, political, and socio-cultural contexts. Further studies should be conducted with a broader scope to affirm the results further. Besides, the stakeholder conflict should be more deeply observed from other parties' perceptions. Additionally, there are opportunities for further research on conflict at various levels, including intrapersonal, interpersonal, and intra-group. Finally, researchers could explore alternative tools for identifying and resolving conflicts, such as the Circle of Conflict model by Moore (2003).

DECLARATION

1. Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

2. Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

Generative AI was utilized only for language editing and readability improvement. The authors take full responsibility for the content of the manuscript.

3. Data availability statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

4. Ethics statement

This study followed ethical principles for research with human participants. Participation in the survey/interview was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Participants were also informed that their responses would remain confidential and used only for academic research purposes.

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Hien Thi Duong: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

Dao Thi Xuan Truong: Formal analysis, Writing – review & editing.

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