THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TOURISM STAKEHOLDERS IN THE GOVERNANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN TAMAN NEGARA PAHANG

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Abstract:

Sustainable tourism development highlighted the need for governance, and recognising stakeholder collaboration would enhance overall tourism development. Hence, this study assesses the roles and responsibilities of the tourism stakeholders in the governance for sustainable tourism in Taman Negara Pahang. This qualitative research employed semi-structured interviews to understand the interactions and involvement of tourism stakeholders in the planning and development of the national park. It was found that the national park was mainly secured by state enactment and several development and management plans. DWNP was a federal department of MNRES appointed by the trustee to administer the park. Other stakeholders were not involved in the park planning and development except for the department and consultations from experts. While some government agencies, namely the local authority and MOTAC, assisted in developing tourism infrastructure and superstructure around the national park, NGOs shared the latest conservation information and guidelines. Local community groups and tourism operators mainly managed recreational activities while providing tourists with other facilities and services. As the local community groups were affected by tourism development in the national park, they should become partners in park governance to meet their needs. This study draws the attention of government agencies to revise the existing state enactment to allow all tourism stakeholders, particularly the local community groups, to play a role in park planning and development. Their involvement in such an event may help improve their understanding of the park's sustainability, build trust between them and improve their sense of ownership and pride.

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Introduction

Tourism stakeholders' participation in destination planning, development, and management process was essential in offering a better life for the local community and a pleasant travel experience for tourists without compromising the attractiveness of a natural environment (Roday et al., 2009). It was a continuous improvement process that required monitoring the impacts of tourism on the environment, economic growth, and social welfare of a destination (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2012). Tourism stakeholders are the individuals or organizations that are affected by tourism development, namely commercial agents such as transport, accommodation, and food service providers, government authorities, non-governmental organizations, local communities, and tourists. Their collaboration in the decision-making process ensures that the authorities listen to their views and ideas and, therefore, effectively creates the mutual understanding and interest of all parties while attaining the desired outcomes (World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2013). In other words, their involvement in tourism development may ensure that all development strategies and plans can be implemented to meet their needs. Instead, the principles of sustainability are met.

The interaction between individuals or organizations in decision-making based on their power and responsibility is known as governance (Graham et al., 2003). Tourism stakeholders have different concerns, such as environmental protection, economic well-being, and travel satisfaction. Governance for sustainable tourism came into play when one stakeholder could not address related issues due to limited financial resources, time, and workforce. On the other hand, a collaborative network of skills, knowledge, ideas, finance, and other resources seemed to produce an inclusive solution without neglecting each other's views and interests. Asmelash and Kumar (2019) discovered institutional sustainability as the fourth dimension contributing to the success of sustainable tourism, in addition to the concerns of economic, social, and environmental. The collaboration between the tourism stakeholders plays an important role in planning, developing, and managing tourist destinations in accordance with their respective roles and responsibilities. At the same time, sharing experiences, knowledge, and skills can reduce conflicts of interest while establishing strategies and decisions for sustainable tourism development.

Developments in sustainable tourism highlighted the need for governance, recognizing that collaboration among stakeholders would enhance the overall development of tourism (Bramwell, 2011; Chen, 2015; Erkuş-Öztürk & Eraydın, 2010; UNEP-WCMC et al., 2018; Waligo et al., 2013). Lane (2018) identified governance as one of the top 20 potential growth areas for sustainable tourism research. Maintaining stakeholder collaboration was challenging due to different perspectives and interests (Bramwell, 2011). Understanding the stakeholders' relationships was necessary to guide them in determining sustainable destination planning (Becken & Job, 2014; Saito & Ruhanen, 2017). Hence, this study allows the researcher to further understand governance in the context of sustainable tourism in protected areas and subsequently find solutions.

Cook et al. (2018) stated that the increase in visitor arrivals at Taman Negara National Park has exceeded its carrying capacity. The impacts of human intervention have made wildlife scarce, and litter can be observed in the park. Particularly, several recent research of Taman Negara Pahang highlighted the need to maintain the quality of the natural environment (Bookhari et al., 2022), improve the quality experience of ecotourists towards local culture (Khairudin & Rahman, 2020) and encourage the involvement of indigenous people and local communities in tourism-related activities (Lim & Tan, 2020; Yushairi et al., 2022). To tackle these problems, park governance that allows all tourism stakeholders to share experience, knowledge, and skills while establishing strategies and decisions could be the best way to achieve sustainable tourism in the park.

This study intends to assess the roles and responsibilities of the tourism stakeholders in the governance for sustainable tourism in Taman Negara Pahang. Thus, the manner in which the current tourism stakeholders exercise their authority and responsibilities, make decisions, and express their views in park planning and development will be assessed. In addition, the researcher reveals the influence of instruments and power on the interactions among the tourism stakeholders in governing the national park.

Literature Review

The government was the only body responsible for the protected area until the IUCN IVth World Park Congress in 1992 when the management structure of the protected areas changed (Chape et al., 2008; UNEP-WCMC, 2017). With a more comprehensive range of stakeholder participation in decision-making, the former approach has become less centralized, meaning greater emphasis must be placed on reaching planned goals effectively (Borrini-Feyerabend et al., 2013). The idea of "governance of protected area" started to gain attention at the Vth World Parks Congress a decade later (Chape et al., 2008). The 1992 and 2003 congresses provided new directions for managing protected areas, emphasizing the importance of identifying the rights, knowledge and roles, and capacity building of indigenous peoples and local communities in conserving protected areas (UNEP-WCMC, 2017). Later, the concept of protected area governance received recognition at other international meetings, such as the World Conservation Congress (WCC) in Bangkok in 2004 and Barcelona in 2008 (Dudley, 2008).

According to Eagles (2014, p. 542), "governance is the means for achieving direction, control and coordination." In particular, Graham et al. (2003) refer governance as the "interactions among structures, processes, and traditions that determine how power and responsibilities are exercised, how decisions are taken, and how citizens or other stakeholders have their say in achieving a direction. It shows how interests and power were met and exercised in decision-making and implementation concerning public life and social uplift. Governance was broader than government and included relations between the state and the people (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2014). Building a global partnership for development was of utmost importance as it continuously became one of the goals of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, n.d.). Similarly, Siakwah et al. (2020) also found that achieving the SDGs required collaboration between international bodies, governments, the private sector, and locals through governance based on justice, trust, and equitable power relations.

Although the government plays an essential role as an investor, regulator, planner and coordinator (Farmaki et al., 2015) and has always had an influence on policy-making in sustainable tourism (Bramwell, 2011), they are not always the most powerful stakeholder

(Farmaki, 2015). Sentanu et al. (2023) and Tang and Tang (2006) concluded that the government could only provide superior problem-solving alternatives with the cooperation of the public, private and non-profit sectors. Collaborative efforts based on governance will support decision-making processes and reduce conflicts of interest in addressing governance challenges in sustainable tourism development. Sentanu et al. (2023) found that governance in tourism is an essential tool for tourism innovation and ecological conservation.

Stakeholders have mutual obligations and responsibilities. Thus, they need to be identified in order to interact and collaborate. Tourism stakeholders refer to groups or individuals associated with tourism development initiatives in a tourism setting. Therefore, they may be affecting or affected by decisions and activities relating to these initiatives (Waligo et al., 2013). Public authorities or national and local governments, tourism operators, NGOs, international bodies, tourists, and local communities living in or around tourist destination areas are tourism stakeholders (Nyaupane et al., 2022; Roxas et al., 2020; Saito & Ruhanen, 2017). They interact to help support each other and contribute to sustainability through regulation, conservation and livelihood creation (Roxas et al., 2020). Their collaboration in decision-making can resolve conflicts of interest while ensuring that everyone can share the benefits of decision-making (Robertson, 2011).

Governance was affected by instruments and power. Stakeholders can use instruments to exercise their authority and responsibilities, for instance, national legislation, policies, strategies, regulations, plans, finance, public support, and management arrangements (Borrini-Feyerabend et al., 2013; Eagles, 2014; Petursson & Kristofersson, 2021). Buchy and Race (2001) discovered that communities that depended most on natural resources had the least power to decide on the use of forest resources in the Australian natural resource management participation process. Dudley (2008) claimed that the local communities were usually notified only after the government had decided on a protected area. According to Siakwah et al. (2020), similar problems persisted in South Africa and Zimbabwe when there was a lack of legislation empowering local communities to undertake tourism projects in the sustainable tourism development process. The community should be empowered by education and training and given more opportunities to participate in tourism services, planning, and decision-making (Zhang et al., 2022). They were essential partners in tourism governance (Bichler, 2021; Siakwah et al., 2020).

Methodology

Study Area

Taman Negara Pahang is part of Taman Negara National Park, one of Malaysia's oldest and largest protected areas. According to the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP) (1987), the national park was established to protect the unique flora and fauna and preserve objects and places of aesthetic, historic and scientific interest. It also promotes educational and recreational use for the enjoyment of visitors to raise awareness and appreciation of Malaysian tropical rainforest heritage. Taman Negara National Park is administered and managed by the DWNP, a department placed under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability (MNRES) purview. The development of Taman Negara National Park is secured by the Wildlife Conservation Act 2010 [Act 716] and the Taman Negara master plan. In addition, Taman Negara Pahang is secured by its legislation and individual management plan – Taman Negara Enactment (Pahang) No. 2, 1939 and the management plan for Taman Negara Pahang.

According to Aziz et al. (2018), Gunung Tahan, adventure activities, streams and rapids, canopy walkway, nature trails, and flora and fauna diversity were all essential attractions in the national park. Notably, Taman Negara Pahang has been reported as one of the beginner-friendly spots for birdwatching (Ab Latif, 2020) and has gained visibility as one of the best bird-watching sites in the country (Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, 2019; Tourism Malaysia, 2018). On top of its natural attractions, Taman Negara Pahang was also known as home to the Orang Asli or indigenous people of Malaysia. The indigenous people in Taman Negara Pahang were mainly distributed at different locations within and opposite the park. Their unique culture and local knowledge are also highlights of the national park. Tourists may experience traditional weapon hunting, fire-making and bamboo blow piping when visiting the Orang Asli settlements.

Figure 1: Location Map of Taman Negara Pahang

Research Method

This exploratory research employed a qualitative research method, allowing the researcher to explore, explain, and uncover a local phenomenon (Veal, 2018). Hence, the research findings cannot be generalized to a broader condition. An in-depth interview is a conversation between the researcher and an informant designed to clarify questions that lead to an in-depth understanding of an issue, event or people (Hammond & Wellington, 2013; Sirakaya-Turk & Uysal, 2017). It is also known as an informal, unstructured or semi-structured interview (Chua, 2016; Veal, 2018). It is guided by a checklist of topics and often digitally recorded and notes or verbatim transcripts (Veal, 2018). The interview allows the respondents to express their thoughts, feelings, and opinions (Hammond & Wellington, 2013), showing a localized context (Ruddell, 2011). Accordingly, the researcher gathers ideas and details from different perspectives (Chua, 2016).

Government agencies, local community groups, non-governmental organizations, tourism operators and tourists are the identified stakeholders in tourism governance in Taman Negara Pahang. Interviews were conducted with 11 informants representing these tourism stakeholders who may be involved in local, district, and state park planning. According to Wanner and Pröbstl-Haider (2019), tourists may not be interested in the development matter. Their short-term visit has neither influenced park planning, management, or governance (Buteau-Duitschaever et al., 2010) nor the decision-making process (Eagles & McCool, 2000). Hence, they were not involved in the interview session. However, tourist feedback on their satisfaction was essential in measuring governance effectiveness. 15 – 20 open-ended questions were developed on the interaction among the tourism stakeholders, contribution and involvement in tourism planning and development in Taman Negara Pahang, as well as their expectations toward the park governance. The interviews were conducted at their workplace or home, each taking 30 to 50 minutes. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The researcher noted down initial ideas and coded interesting features of the data systematically. The data analysis was done manually without any data analysis software programs. Then, the researcher gathered codes into potential themes that best represented the meaning of the response. Lastly, the researcher integrated the themes and responses into the text of the report.

Results

Stakeholders' Role
The interviews were conducted with 11 informants representing government agencies, tourism operators, local community groups, and non-governmental organizations at the local, district, and state levels who may be involved in the planning and development process of the national park. These informants were the representatives from the DWNP of Taman Negara Pahang, Taman Negara Nature Tourist Guide Association, Taman Negara Kuala Tahan Berhad Corporation, Persatuan Pengusaha Pelancongan Taman Negara, Taman Negara Bird Group, Mutiara Taman Negara Resort, the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC) of Pahang and the local community groups of Kampung Kuala Tahan.

Stakeholder meetings were conducted either by the park superintendent or the district officer as a platform for the local community groups and tourism operators to identify their needs or discuss current issues (Z2, Z4, Z8). Informant Z1 and Informant Z5 expressed that they were keen to attend the meeting because it was an important channel for them and other stakeholders to address their problems and find solutions. Representatives generally shared good points and suggestions (Z7) and engaged actively in the meetings (Z1, Z5, Z6, Z10, Z11).

The stakeholders were involved in two different meetings depending on the agenda of the meeting, whether it was related to Kampung Kuala Tahan or Taman Negara Pahang. The park superintendent would chair the meetings related to the park while the district officer handled the village issues at the local authority offices, Pejabat Daerah Tanah (PDT) Jerantut and Majlis Daerah Jerantut (MDJ) (Z2, Z9). Both stakeholders' meetings were held quarterly at their respective offices. All park-related issues would be discussed in the stakeholder meetings led by the park superintendent and then presented to the head office of DWNP or MNRES. On the other hand, issues of the village were presented to the Jawatankuasa Kemajuan dan Keselamatan Kampung (JKKK) by local community groups and tourism operators, which were then proposed to the district officer. Informant Z2 highlighted that the park superintendent and district officer have full authority over the park and the village development plans, respectively.

In Taman Negara Pahang, DWNP of Taman Negara Pahang, MOTAC of Pahang, MNRES, Department of Irrigation and Drainage (DID) of Pahang, and the State Economic Planning Unit Division (EPU) were the leading government agencies responsible for direct or indirect tourism development in the park (Z5, Z8). Informant Z4 emphasized the importance of the DWNP of Taman Negara Pahang in park conservation. In many cases, the DWNP of Taman Negara Pahang implemented suggestions from other stakeholders, especially tourism activities, as long as they did not violate the park policy. However, further reference must be made to MNRES if the issues involved park policy (Z4, Z6).

> *DWNP of Taman Negara Pahang plays the role of a planner and an executor* [Informant Z4].

MOTAC of Pahang is the state tourism office of MOTAC, a federal government tourism office. The ministry plays a significant role as a planner, developer and facilitator of the tourism industry in the country. Informant Z6 stated that MOTAC of Pahang and EPU provided a park and village development budget. The former provided budgets for tourism-related development programs; otherwise, the budgets would come from the latter. In some cases, the director of MOTAC of Pahang would chair the stakeholder meetings if the agenda was relevant to tourism development (Z11).

> *MOTAC of Pahang only helps financially; all decisions depend on the asset owner because we do not own the land* [Informant Z9].
> *MOTAC of Pahang will attend meetings related to park tourism planning, especially where funding is involved* [Informant Z11].

MOTAC of Pahang provided budget and facilities like shop lots for the locals of Kampung Kuala Tahan and encouraged them to set up businesses and generate income from tourism (Z9). However, the researcher observed that only several locals were serious about operating their businesses and using government-provided facilities well. Some stores were closed most of the time or did not regularly open, as shown in Figure 2. At the same time, MOTAC of Pahang also allocated a budget to develop tourist facilities in the park. In addition, the ministry has been very supportive of co-organizing tourism-related events, such as bird counting events, which have been one of the most popular events in recent years (Z9). Eventually, MOTAC worked with a consultation team led by Dr Amran Hamzah, a former Professor in Tourism Planning and Director of the Centre for Innovative Planning and Development (CIPD) at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, a local public university, to develop the National Ecotourism Plan 2016-2025.

> *We prepared the eco-tourism master plan. A workshop was held with stakeholders like the DWNP of Taman Negara Pahang, ministries, PDT Jerantut, and agencies nearby, including the NGOs and hotel operators. We called for everyone. We had it at Xcape Resort* [Informant Z9].

Additionally, Z9 indicated that MOTAC of Pahang offered tourism operators tourism-related workshops, such as food management, customer service, water rescue, risk management, etc., to improve their skills. Notably, the ministry provided tourist guide courses and produced qualified nature guides. Nature guides in the park played an essential role in delivering

educational information about the wildlife to the tourists while conducting activities in the park. Lastly, besides providing services such as flood mitigation, river management, coastal management, stormwater management, dams and laws and regulations, DID of Pahang provided technical advice on water resources management around the park and the village (Z5, Z9, Z11).

Sungai Tembeling was one of the important routes to Taman Negara Pahang before road network development in the 90s. Tourists could take a boat ride from Kuala Tembeling Jetty to the park for about 3 hours. Although they can now drive to Kampung Kuala Tahan, a scenic boat ride to the park is still popular with nature lovers. However, the importance of the river was not limited to tourists. Still, it was also the main transport route for villagers of nearby villages, such as Kampung Pagi, Kampung Kuala Sat and Hulu Tembeling to Kampung Kuala Tahan or the national park for work routine. Hence, the DID of Pahang played a role in issuing boat licenses and monitoring and controlling boat operations to ensure the safety of boat passengers.

PDT Jerantut is the main office for implementing the government's policies and development projects approved by the state government at the district level, including all rural areas. According to Jerantut District and Land Office (2017), it served as the secretariat to the District Development Committee and District Planning Committee, chaired by the Jerantut district officer, the head of the administration. Informant Z2 stated that all the administrators at different levels, for instance, the sub-district head (penghulu mukim) and village head (ketua kampung), assisted the district officer and other government agencies in monitoring development projects. A village is at the lowest administrative level in a district administration. The state government appoints the village head and, through JKKK, represents all matters in the village, like Kampung Kuala Tahan.

According to Majlis Daerah Jerantut (2010), it served as a local authority or a development agent for the urban areas at the district level. The core businesses of the district council focused on licensing, rental, tenders and quotations, economic development, and legislation. However, public issues, such as health, transportation, and the environment, remained controlled by federal government agencies. Hence, the federal government initiated a Resident Representative Committee (JPP) to assist the state and local authority in interacting directly with the local community. JPP encouraged the locals to participate in the development programs in urban areas and voice their problems to the government.

Besides the stakeholders' meetings for planning and development purposes, a protected area seminar was conducted in February 2016 by DWNP of Taman Negara Pahang with the support of the UNDP as part of the PA Financing Project planning. Many representatives attended the seminar to discuss the development and financial management of Taman Negara Pahang as a protected area (Z1, Z5, Z11). Informant Z6 explained further that UNDP provided guidelines for the protection of the park through the PA Financing Project. Other national and international NGOs, such as the Malaysia Nature Society (MNS) and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Malaysia, played no significant role in park development (Z9, Z11). By some means, they provided guidelines on wildlife and forest reserves.

Stakeholders' Interaction

DWNP was a federal government department mandated to manage the park, coordinate all tourism activities, and provide guidelines to park users (Z6). Taman Negara Pahang was controlled and managed by the DWNP of Taman Negara Pahang according to the Taman Negara Pahang Management Plan and the Taman Negara master plan and secured by the state enactment. The federal government remained dominant in determining the conservation objectives, developing and enforcing its management plan, and holding the authority, responsibility, and accountability for managing the national park.

Apart from MNRE and DWNP, other tourism stakeholders were not involved in any planning activities for park development and conservation (Z1, Z3, Z5, Z6, Z7, Z8, Z10, Z11). Further, the local community groups were unaware of any plans related to Taman Negara Pahang (Z2, Z3). For example, only DWNP officials were appointed to draft the Taman Negara master plan. Nonetheless, the plan was reviewed every 5 years by representatives from different sectors and disciplines, namely DWNP, the tourist development corporation, the WWF Malaysia, the MNS, and the Malaysian Mountaineering Association (DWNP, 1987).

The national park was an essential platform for tourism activities supporting local community living. They either set up tourism businesses and generated income by providing tourism services and facilities or worked as tourism employees (Z6, Z8, Z11). Besides benefiting from tourism, they participated in park management and wildlife protection activities. Park rangers worked closely with nature guides for trail maintenance and pathway cleaning during monsoon closures (Z1, Z3, Z5, Z10, Z11).

Indigenous people living in the park became informants and reported poaching and intrusion activities, assuming that these activities would destroy their homeland (Z3, Z11). It is worth noting that the bird-watching event organized by the local community through the Taman Negara Bird Group indicated an increased sense of ownership and appreciation of the park's natural values while promoting the local community's traditional knowledge for sustainable growth. Collaboration among stakeholders should not be limited to managing daily tourism activities and park maintenance; it needs to be strengthened through collaboration in park development and conservation planning activities (Z1, Z5).

> *The collaboration between the DWNP of Taman Negara Pahang and us exists, but there is a lack of collaboration in the park development plan compared to park maintenance* [Informant Z5].

Informant Z1 recognized the importance of involving the local community in park planning. Similarly, Informant Z4 admitted the need for feedback from the tourism operators because they dealt with the tourists and knew them well.

> *We need to know the development planning… it needs to be discussed with communities and get their feedback because they know the place better. We get feedback from the tourists on what they need, want, and expect from this national park* [Informat Z1].

Informants Z1, Z2, Z3, Z5, Z7, and Z10 claimed that it had been a long time since the former park superintendent conducted the last meeting before the flood in 2014. Some of them (Z1,

Z3, Z5) revealed that there had been no consistent interaction between tourism stakeholders since the appointment of the new park superintendent in the same year. However, NGO representatives, tourism operators and locals can still express their problems to the park superintendent at any time. Informant Z1 and Informant Z2 highlighted that frequent conversion of park superintendent was a problem for other tourism stakeholders who had to develop new suggestions due to communication disruptions.

> *A discussion is a stakeholders meeting. As I said, we have not held stakeholder meetings for a long time* [Informant Z7].

When complaints arose concerning service and hospitality or any current issues affecting their interests, the park superintendent sought stakeholder suggestions and solutions. The discipline of nature guides, park safety and facility maintenance were common issues. In many cases, the voices of stakeholders were heard. The meeting could reach a consensus, provided it did not go against the park's policies and regulations (Z4, Z9, Z11).

For example, the park superintendent received objections from the local community over the closure of Gua Telinga as it limited tourism activities and affected the income of tourism operators. The voices were heard, and geologists were hired to investigate the structure of the area. Eventually, they agreed to close the cave because the investigation showed that it was unsafe and would threaten the safety of tourists (Z5).

Stakeholders actively joined in discussions on the park conducted by the park superintendent or NGOs. However, reaching a consensus was difficult since each may have different interests. The finding is consistent with the findings of past studies. Local communities may have greater economic interest (Eagles et al., 2002). Indigenous people may face cultural and social constraints in their participation (Boyd, 2000), while park management was concerned with wildlife protection and park protection conservation. Therefore, the park superintendent discussed separately with the stakeholders to avoid conflicts during the meeting. Informant Z1 seemed to agree with the approach.

> *...the meeting did not go smoothly. They argued with each other over their interests* [Informant Z4].
> *... when he calls us separately, we can go straight to the point and discuss because DWNP of Taman Negara Pahang is the patron* [Informant Z1].

Kampung Kuala Tahan was administered by PDT Jerantut with the assistance of MDJ. Tourism stakeholders from Kampung Kuala Tahan would be invited to stakeholder meetings hosted by the district official every three to four months in Jerantut town (Z1, Z6, Z10). The findings show that local community participation in the development of the village was higher than that of Taman Negara Pahang. Tourism in the park had changed the economic structure (switching from agriculture to tourism) and could impact the future development of the village.

In other words, the planning for Kampung Kuala Tahan depended on increased tourist arrivals in Taman Negara Pahang. Without proper planning, it may result in excessive construction of tourist facilities, polluted areas, congestion, and cultural conflicts in the village, which could eventually provoke dissatisfaction among tourists. Due to these reasons, together with the representatives of the village and government agencies, *Rancangan Kawasan Khas Kuala*

Tahan 2020 was developed to combat the above problems. Although they were not the primary decision-makers, they were involved in the village development planning process. At least the village head and other village representatives were aware of the development projects that would be undertaken occasionally (Z2).

The primary purpose of the plan was to strengthen the role of Kampung Kuala Tahan as a gateway to Taman Negara Pahang. Apart from developing the local economy on a tourism basis and improving the public transport facilities, the plan aimed to overcome problems such as congestion and pollution resulting from unplanned land-use development. The role of the local community did not end in the planning process. Once the development projects were implemented, the local community played a vital role in monitoring the projects to ensure plan effectiveness.

The Influences of Instruments and Power on the Stakeholders' Interaction
The main governance instruments affecting the development of Taman Negara Pahang are the Taman Negara Enactment (Pahang) No. 2, 1939, the Wildlife Conservation Act 2010 (Act 716), the Taman Negara Master Plan and the Taman Negara Pahang Management Plan. The biodiversity of Taman Negara Pahang is safeguarded mainly by the Taman Negara Enactment (Pahang) No. 2, 1939 and the Wildlife Conservation Act 2010 (Act 716). The state enactment clearly states that the park was established to protect and preserve the native flora and fauna and objects and places with aesthetic, historical, or scientific value. It prohibits activities that destroy or harm flora and fauna in the national park.

With the enactment, DWNP developed the Taman Negara master plan to guide other management plans. In addition to protecting and conserving natural resources, the master plan also sets out policies and park planning for Indigenous people, visitors and people living in the area. These governance instruments guide all tourism stakeholders in achieving sustainable development (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2012; Sentanu et al., 2023; World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 2013). Accordingly, the Taman Negara Pahang Management Plan was created.

The state enactment recorded that the trustees have full power or may appoint any officer to administer the park. As a result, the director-general of DWNP was appointed as an officer-in-charge of Taman Negara. Subsequently, with the consent of the Yang DiPertuan Agong, the park superintendent, assistant superintendent, and park rangers were appointed by the officer in charge of managing the park. Although park officials have the power to manage the park, to a certain extent, DWNP also faced limitations, such as increasing the entry permit fee, which was a protracted issue (Z6).

The park superintendent would consult with tourism stakeholders when problems arose in the daily operations. Usually, these decisions were taken based on a majority vote if they did not contradict park policies and regulations (Z6). However, besides addressing current issues, tourism stakeholders do not influence park development and conservation planning activities. Taman Negara Pahang is a protected area. Hence, the park operation is determined by park legislation and the enactments of the national park (Z2, Z3).

According to Informant Z4, it was complicated to propose new tourism activities as they worked within limitations. The park authority needed to ensure that it did not affect the park conservation despite new activities. Meanwhile, the safety of tourists was also assured. Many

informants agreed that directors made all decisions and approvals related to park development at MNRE (Z4, Z6, Z8, Z9, Z10, Z11). As stated in the Taman Negara master plan, all tourism activities should be conducted under the control of the DWNP as long as they comply with the state enactment.

Informant Z9 explained that the ministry was the final decision maker, whose authority was stated in the act. Similarly, Informant Z4 mentioned that park policy was formulated by top management officials, directors and superintendents based on the national park enactments without community involvement. This indicated that the PDT Jerantut, MOTAC and MNRE are the three government agencies that administered and were responsible for planning and development in Kampung Kuala Tahan and Taman Negara Pahang.

> *... power is power, and we cannot empower the people* [Informant Z4].
> *They (the locals) have no powers, but the government agencies have* [Informant Z6].
> *…the final decision is either made by district officials, the Ministry of Tourism, or the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment* [Informant Z2].
> *All decisions are based on the asset owner, circumstances, and policies. Other stakeholders do not influence decisions made* [Informant Z9].

Informant Z5 commented that there was still a lack of community involvement in ecotourism policy formulation and a commitment to the park. Therefore, they wanted to promote community-based tourism (CBT) to strengthen the role of the local community as part of the policymakers for eco-tourism in the park and were responsible for developing Kampung Kuala Tahan (Z5, Z10). Informant Z4 highlighted that it was ideal for all stakeholders to plan and manage the park without personal interests like money and other benefits.

> *We need them (the community) to participate in all activities in Taman Negara, such as law enforcement, conservation work, and eco-tourism. They are one of the entities that cannot be shelved. They have to be members of our group. Whenever we decide on policies and regulations, consider them and refer to them because they are locals. Anything we implement in Taman Negara affects them* [Informant Z4].

In addition to formal rules, the influences also came from informal ones. Due to the limited educational background, no locals held management positions in the DWNP of Taman Negara Pahang. They were low-level workers, namely administrative assistants, wildlife assistants, general workers and drivers. However, these local workers had control over the work culture and environment. They were somewhat comfortable with the current work environment, resulting in an easygoing attitude. Consequently, it limited the effectiveness of park management and conservation (Z4, Z11). Figure 3 shows the engagement level of the stakeholders in tourism development in Taman Negara Pahang. Government agencies have the authority, responsibility and accountability to set the conservation objectives and develop and enforce the management plans. Other tourism stakeholders' support for tourism development, namely tourism operators, local community groups, and NGOs, was limited to managing tourism activities. Uncovering these roles may have implications for a greater understanding of engaging the primary stakeholders in further tourism management settings (Todd et al., 2017).

Holding stakeholder meetings every 3 months was a good platform for sharing ideas. Everything went well with the involvement of stakeholders in the development planning of Kampung Kuala Tahan but not in the park planning. As local community groups and tourism operators derived direct benefits from tourism activities, personal interest conflicts always occurred. They found it difficult to reach an agreement during the meeting. Further, the frequent changeover of the park superintendent could be the reason for communication disruptions. Hence, the park superintendent may have taken a simple approach to overcome this problem by replacing the stakeholder meetings with individual discussions, thereby reducing their decision-making power.
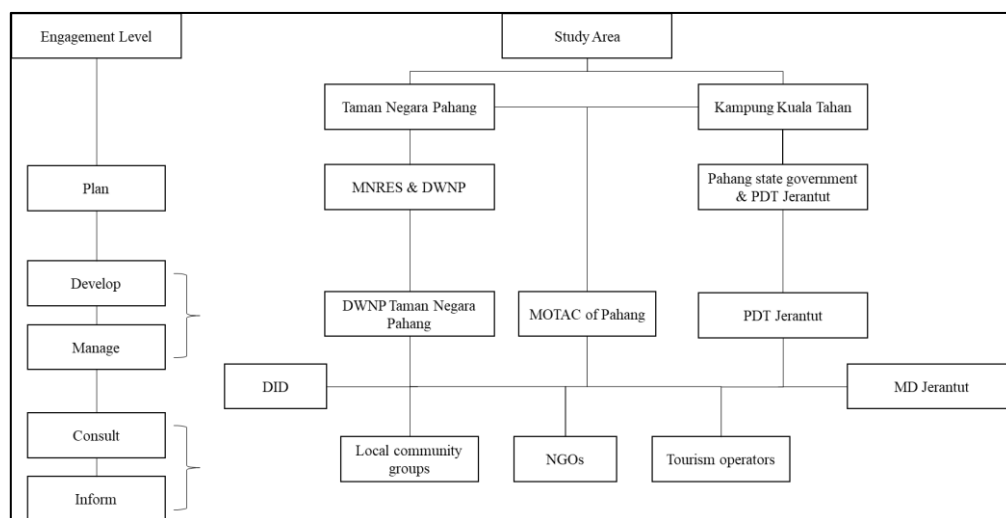
Figure 2: Stakeholders' Engagement In Tourism Development In Taman Negara Pahang

Discussions

The tourism stakeholders in Taman Negara Pahang were the government agencies, local community groups, NGOs, tourism operators and tourists. Although tourists were not involved in planning and developing park tourism, feedback on tourist satisfaction was essential in monitoring the effectiveness of tourism governance and overall park performance. The findings clearly show that each stakeholder played a vital role in park governance and had different responsibilities. The national park was mainly secured by state enactment. As a result, several development and management plans were developed at the national and state levels, which only involved most experts and government agencies. DWNP of Taman Negara Pahang controlled, monitored, and managed tourism activities in the park; local community groups and tourism operators offered tourism services and managed recreational activities, while NGOs provided park conservation guidelines for planning and development purposes.

Indigenous people were also part of the tourist attractions due to their unique culture and traditional lifestyle in the forest. Hence, a close relationship was built between these tourism stakeholders. However, aligned with the previous research (Lim & Tan, 2020), interaction among stakeholders appeared to be limited in daily activities. Apart from the DWNP of Taman Negara Pahang, other stakeholders were not involved in decision-making and were unaware of park planning and development.

There was no empowerment in the decision-making process. All the park planning and development decisions were made at the federal government level, and no decisions can be made at the local level. Consistent with the study by North et al. (2008), the researcher found that the park authority believed it had the right and ability to make the best solution for the park. However, the area's daily management, particularly tourism activities, was delegated to the tourism operators and local community groups. Besides, they will be informed of the park's development occasionally. The findings support the idea of Dudley (2008), who found that other stakeholders were only notified after making decisions.

Previously, a stakeholders meeting was held quarterly to discuss day-to-day issues. However, reaching a consensus was not accessible due to conflicts of personal interests. Frequent disputes affected their relationship, causing them to lose trust and confidence in managing tourism activities and conserving the park together. The findings support the ideas of Hall (2007) and Hall and Jenkins (2004). As a result, their involvement in the tourism planning process decreased (Benedetto et al., 2016; Buchy & Race, 2001). Besides, the outcome of individual discussions in place of stakeholder meetings was poorly documented. Hence, communication failures occurred when the park superintendent changed.

To encourage local community groups to participate in park governance, the DWNP of Taman Negara Pahang needs to raise awareness and educate them on the importance of a sustainable environment to support the long-term viability of the economy. Not only are they affected by the tourism development policy in the park, but they could also improve the status quo of the park. In addition to the knowledge, beliefs, and traditional practices of the Indigenous people that are appropriate to ecological conditions, modern knowledge and technology need to be made available to Indigenous people to ensure that they are competent and contribute to better park protection. Department of Orang Asli Affairs (JAKOA) could do so as a governmental department whose role is to ensure the well-being of the indigenous people by improving their socio-economic and living standards.

Kampung Kuala Tahan has been an essential platform for developing tourism infrastructure since the early 90s to support tourism development in the park. Apart from providing the boat service early, the local community has also set up accommodation facilities and restaurants while managing recreational activities to cope with the increasing number of tourist arrivals. In other words, Taman Negara Pahang dan Kampung Kuala Tahan are two separate entities, but they are closely related. The development of the village is accelerating and requires careful and integrated planning to avoid negative impacts resulting from the tourism development in Taman Negara Pahang.

The present findings appear consistent with another study by Rhodes (1996), which found that rules and trust were crucial for maintaining relationships and interactions. Hence, there is a need to revise Section 6 of Taman Negara Enactment (Pahang) No. 2, 1939, which gives full powers to the trustees (DWNP) in administering the State Park. Tourism stakeholders need to work together for park planning, as they did in designing the National Ecotourism Plan 2016-2025. Besides, the tourism stakeholders' meetings need to be resumed as a platform to discuss park planning and development and recreational activities in the park. Accordingly, it builds trust between them and improves the sense of ownership and pride in the parks.

In summary, Taman Negara Pahang is categorized by DWNP as an ecotourism destination for conservation, economic and social interests. For these reasons, the local community was keen to participate in the planning and managing the national park, hoping to derive the optimum social and economic benefits from tourism development. Sustainability is a global topic involving the overall well-being of humankind. As the local community groups were affected by tourism development in the national park, they should become partners in planning and managing these areas to meet their needs. Perhaps they may contribute skills and local knowledge to achieve sustainable tourism in the protected area.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The roles and responsibilities of the tourism stakeholders in the governance for sustainable tourism in Taman Negara Pahang are identified. Tourism stakeholders share responsibility for achieving sustainable development goals for the national park. Their interaction reflects governance. The findings show that the national park was mainly secured by state enactment and several development and management plans. DWNP was a federal department of MNRES appointed by the trustee to administer the park. However, the department must work within the restrictions set by the enactment to protect the national park from any human activity that would destroy flora and fauna. Other stakeholders were not involved in the park planning and development except for the department itself and consultations from experts. While some government agencies, namely the local authority and MOTAC, assisted in developing tourism infrastructure and superstructure around the national park, NGOs shared the latest conservation information and guidelines. Local community groups and tourism operators mainly managed recreational activities while providing tourists with other facilities and services. They also assisted in maintaining and monitoring activities in the national park. These stakeholders have different concerns over the tourism development in the park, and it was not easy to reach a consensus.

Stakeholder meetings were held quarterly. However, frequent conflicts during the meeting caused the park superintendent to lose trust and confidence in the joint planning for park conservation. Consequently, the decision to replace stakeholder meetings with separate discussions may have limited the involvement of other tourism stakeholders in the decision-making process. Additionally, due to minimal capability and experience in park conservation among local community groups and tourism operators, the park superintendent decided that no empowerment was given in the matter. However, the superintendent always listened to their problems, welcomed suggestions, and looked for solutions to ensure everyone shared the benefits of tourism development in the park. The research findings show that the stakeholders must be empowered to improve their commitment to achieve sustainable development goals. Nevertheless, priority should be given to the capacity building of the local community groups to enhance their skills and knowledge and foster sustainable development and growth in the national park. This study provides insight into the park authority and the concerns of other tourism stakeholders on tourism development in the national park as it significantly affects their livelihood within the area. Hence, future research is recommended to assess the challenges in involving all tourism stakeholders or empowering the local community groups in park governance, which aims to improve their commitment and achieve sustainable tourism goals in Taman Negara Pahang.

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