

## **Stakeholder Management for Tourism Businesses: The Case of Thailand**

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### **Abstract**

One key to sustainable development for tourism is the inclusion of stakeholders. Stakeholder management in tourism helps businesses to achieve success. This paper presents a review and discussion of the concept of managing tourism stakeholders in Thailand with the aim of identifying current and emerging trends in this area. A major finding of this study was that tourism stakeholders in the Thai context could be separated into five groups: public sector, private sector, non-government organizations, residents, and tourists. Furthermore, this study discusses various strategies for managing stakeholder assessment and summarizes guidelines for Thai tourism businesses that can provide important implications for strategic stakeholder management, and can aid in designing and implementing strategies for managing tourism stakeholders in Thailand.

**Keywords:** Stakeholder, Tourism, Business, Thailand

### **Introduction**

The tourism industry plays a crucial role in enhancing the economy and developing local communities (Sautter & Leisen, 1999; Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005). It also provides jobs to communities (Pongponrat & Chantradoan, 2012), which is especially relevant to the context of the tourism industry in Thailand (Pongponrat, 2011). The tourism industry, which involves establishments like restaurants, museums, and local shops, etc. (Brown, Spillman, Lee & Lu, 2014) is a service business; hence, the perspectives of the stakeholders are important for the tourism industry (Waligo, Clarke, & Hawkins, 2013) since stakeholders can directly and indirectly influence the tourism business. Sometimes, the stakeholders have a positive impact towards the organizations; however, they can also negatively impact the organizations (Kuvan & Akan, 2012; Landorf, 2009). Therefore, a tourism business that is aware of the stakeholders' perspectives towards the improving tourism management is the model of sustainable tourism management (Yodsawan & Butcher, 2012).

Tourism business needs to consider many factors in order to develop strategies that involve stakeholders (Munro, King, & Polonsky, 2006; Savage, Nix, Whitehead, & Blair, 1991). If the organizations consider stakeholders' perspectives, they will be able to plan, set objectives, and choose appropriate strategies (Cheng, Hu, Fox, & Zhang, 2012). There are different types of stakeholders, such as tourism marketing organizations, accommodation sourcing groups, public organizations, business sectors, and representatives. (Tkaczynski, Rundle-Thiele, & Beaumont, 2009; Yodsawan & Butcher, 2012). Therefore, it is important that tourism businesses carefully consider the perspectives of the different stakeholders (Tkaczynski et al., 2009) since each stakeholder has different interests (Aas, Ladkin, & Fletcher, 2005). If a business employs appropriate strategies, the business will meet each type of stakeholder's needs (Anderson & Getz, 2008).

A tourism business needs to be aware and understands the different perspectives of the stakeholders for the development of a business plan that answers each of their needs (Byrd, Bosley, & Dronberger, 2009). The cooperation between the tourism business and their stakeholders involves a process of decision-making which plans and deals with different issues involving business plan and business development (Jamel & Getz, 1995). Furthermore, the executives should place an importance on the stakeholders through the use of strategies that can lead to effective business practices (Sautter & Leisen, 1999). Cooperation is necessary for successful business. Also, how the business sector behaves towards the stakeholders in the tourism industry is key to building a strong relationship between the business and the stakeholders (Yilmaz & Gunel, 2009). Despite this, limited research has been conducted correlating multiple stakeholder groups in tourism sector in Thailand.

This article aims to review the existing body of knowledge regarding stakeholder groups in Thailand's tourism industry by examining differences in impact on a tourism business. Moreover, the study reconsiders stakeholders' notions of managing stakeholder for tourism in Thailand and how those affect strategic management in the field of tourism business in Thailand. This study employs the stakeholder's theory in order to define what a stakeholder is in the field of tourism business, each group of stakeholders has different as well as similar characteristics depending on the basis of attributes and criteria appropriate to the situation. This guideline is important as it describes the interaction of the stakeholders and the business. Moreover, the stakeholder's guideline can be used for strategic analysis in order to focus the stakeholders' management plan for tourism business in Thailand.

This article is divided into three sections. The first focuses on the tourism stakeholder. If multiple groups of stakeholders have related interest in the business, then it is important not only to identify stakeholders in Thailand's tourism industry but also to associate them with relevant literature to clarify types of stakeholders in Thailand's tourism industry. Subsequently, in the second section, stakeholder management and strategies application in tourism business through which a framework of policies and tourism planning in Thailand and major stakeholders in analyzing strategy types are described. The concluding section considers guideline implications of the research reviewed.

### **Tourism Stakeholders**

In order to do business, you need to cooperate with other sectors or organizations. Working with other sectors can affect business. Freeman (1984, p.84) posits that the idea of stakeholder strategy was supported by the "stakeholder theory", meaning that organizations should cooperate with different groups of stakeholders, as well as individuals of a business, such as employees, customers, manufacturers, government, and community members because these people can have an impact on business capacity. Therefore, those who make decisions for the organization should be aware of how decisions may affect stakeholders (Jamal & Getz, 1995).

Jamal and Getz (1995, p. 188) define a cooperation as "the cooperative process in making decision by taking the important organizations and communities into consideration in order to plan and solve the problems." Furthermore, continued enhancement of stakeholder theory has seen more emphasis pointed on stakeholder collaboration in the tourism industry. The stakeholder theory can be divided into three different categories (Donaldson & Preston, 1995):

- 1) Normative, which involves morals or philosophy management, including interested stakeholders.
- 2) Instrument, which involves the management of an analysis of the relationship between stakeholder management and different successes for each objective.
- 3) Descriptive, which involves the description of the organization's characteristics such as the nature of the business, the perspective of the manager, the management style, and the manager's attitude.

There are different ways to categorize the stakeholders (Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005). Table 1 shows the types of stakeholders. Different researchers categorized stakeholders in different ways such as the business sectors, employees, shareholders, customers, manufacturers, etc. As there are various types of stakeholders, stakeholders' differences are an important issue that businesses should pay close attention to in order to decide which stakeholders have greater impact on the success of tourism.

Scholars	Types	Descriptions
Clarkson (1995)	6 types	Businesses, employees, shareholders, customers, manufacturers, etc.
Donaldson and Preston (1995)	8 types	Governments, investors, politics, manufacturers, customers, trade associations, employees, and communities
Henriques and Sadorsky (1999)	4 types	Control groups, communities, organizations, and media
Sirgy (2002)	3 types	Internal, external, and other sectors
Yilmaz and Gunel (2009)	2 types	Primary stakeholders and secondary stakeholders
Cheng et al. (2012)	5 types	Employees, local people, business owners, tourists, and guides
Waayers, Lee, and Newsome (2012)	4 types	Government sectors, private sectors, non-profit organizations, and populations
Martinez, Perez, and Bosque (2014)	7 types	Shareholders, customers, employees, business owners, manufacturers, clubs, and socials

**Table 1.** Types of Stakeholders

Stakeholders Types	Involved Local Sectors	Involved Local People
Representatives of Changing	Government sectors	Government sectors
	Industrial sectors	Educational institutions
	Educational institutions	
Leaders of Ideas	Government leaders	Community leaders
		Local businessmen
		Local politicians
Social Networks	Co-workers	Friends
		Relatives
		Neighbors

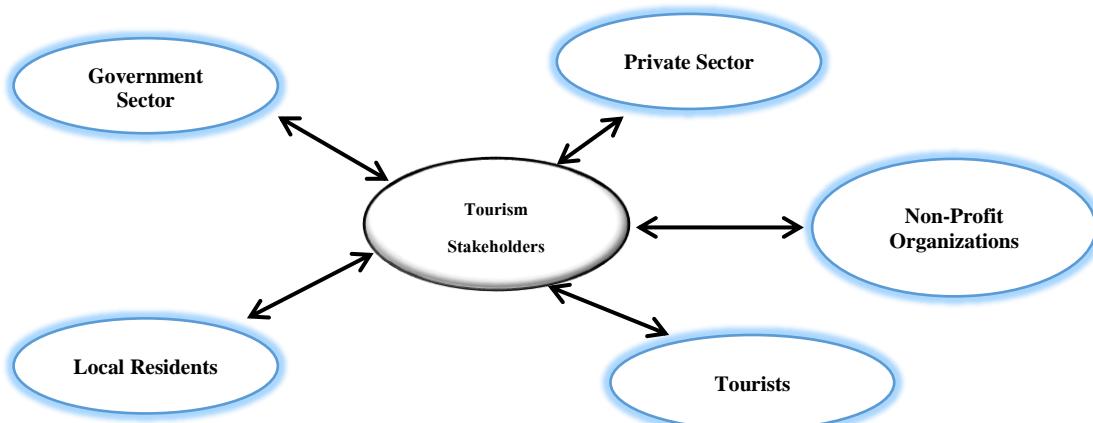
**Table 2.** Stakeholders that are Important for Tourism Development (Adopted from Dabphet et al. [2012])

Stakeholder management in Thailand should have an effective communication structure and appropriate communication channels (Dabphet, Scott, & Ruhanen, 2012) to help develop sustainable tourism business. There are two communication channels that are used for publicizing information on the development of sustainable tourism: public interest of the local community, as well as media

exposure. Table 2 shows the representatives of stakeholders who come from government sectors, industrial sectors, and educational institutions. The local sector involved with this type of stakeholder is a government leader; local individuals involved are community leaders, local businessmen, and local politicians. The last types of stakeholders are social networks where co-workers are part of the local sectors; including friends, relatives, and neighbors.

In order to plan strategies relating to tourism business, executives must understand complicated processes for each step (Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005), stemming from the observation of stakeholders, tourists, business owners, government sectors, including groups of people, or each individual in order to create the strategies and make business plans. For instance, tourism agency, tourism operator and marketer have different perspectives towards tourism and they target tourists differently (Waligo et al., 2013).

A manager should consider various guidelines that are appropriate for the target group in the business. An important factor that creates a successful tourism industry is planning a management structure. It can decide the target group to develop a strategy in relation to the cooperation of the organization (Sautter & Leisen, 1999). Therefore, analyzing stakeholders' needs for each group can result in good management; it can meet the expected objectives (Bornhorst, Ritchie, & Shee, 2010).



**Figure 1.** Stakeholders in the Thai Tourism Industry

As mentioned, it is vital that business sectors pay attention to different types of stakeholders (Hall, 1999). However, to choose which strategies are appropriate for which stakeholders, dividing stakeholders in the Thai tourism industry into five groups seems appropriate, including (Figure 1): government sectors, private sectors, non-profit organizations, local residents, and tourists. These groups were categorized based on the relationship, the cooperation in analyzing principles, and their plans on tourism business (Waayers et al., 2012). Factors important to developing cooperation and planning are setting objectives for tourism development and cooperation in problem solving coming from the stakeholders (Bramwell & Sharmen, 1999). In contrast, giving opportunities to stakeholders to cooperate is one of the main goals in tourism business (Laing, Lee, Moore, Wegner, & Weiler, 2009).

The varieties of stakeholders help the executives define general strategies in order to manage stakeholders with different potentials (Savage et al., 1991). Table 3 shows the types of stakeholders in the Thai tourism industry.

1) The government sector is responsible for planning tourism strategies, coordinating, and supporting tourism industry development, including giving suggestions to other sectors. Stakeholders in this group include the National Tourism Policy Committee, Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Tourism Authority of Thailand, Immigration office, Department of Local Administration etc.

2) Private sectors are responsible for managing the tourism business, including supporting tourism in order to meet the goals and country's strategies. Stakeholders in this group include Chamber of

Commerce, Tourism Council of Thailand, Exhibition and Convention Center, employee, competitors, and tourism business, etc.

3) Non-profit organizations are groups of people who determine cooperation in order to solve social problems. They have the determination to help people in the community become self-reliant. They work with local communities and policy makers. Stakeholders in this group include educational institutions, the Thailand Incentive and Convention Association, the Association of Thai Tour Leaders, Green Leaf Foundation, etc.

4) Local residents are groups of people who live in tourist attraction areas. Stakeholders in this group include residents and community leaders.

5) A tourist is a person who temporarily travels from his or her living area to another place willingly, without the purpose of making a living. Stakeholders in this group are domestic travelers and foreign travelers.

To manage stakeholders, executives need to choose ways that can involve stakeholders in the business. Therefore, understanding the stakeholders is vital to building a strong relationship between the business sector and stakeholders in the tourism industry, in order to maintain sustainable profits.

Government Sector	Private Sector	Non-Profit Organizations	Local Residents	Tourists
National Tourism Policy Committee	Chamber of Commerce	Educational institutions	Residents	Domestic travelers
Department of Special Areas Development for Sustainable Tourism	Tourism Council of Thailand	Thailand Incentive and Convention Association	Community leaders	Foreign travelers
Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau	Exhibition and Convention Center	The Association of Thai Tour Leaders	-	-
Ministry of Tourism and Sports	Employees	Thai Exhibition Association	-	-
Tourism Authority of Thailand	Competitors	The Association of Domestic Travel	-	-
Immigration office	Tourism Businesses	Professional Tourist Guide Association	-	-
Department of Local Administration	Souvenir Businesses	Green Leaf Foundation	-	-
Revenue Department	Restaurant Businesses	Thai Restaurant Association	-	-

**Table 3.** Types of Stakeholders in the Thai Tourism Industry

#### Stakeholder Management and Strategic Applications in Tourism Businesses

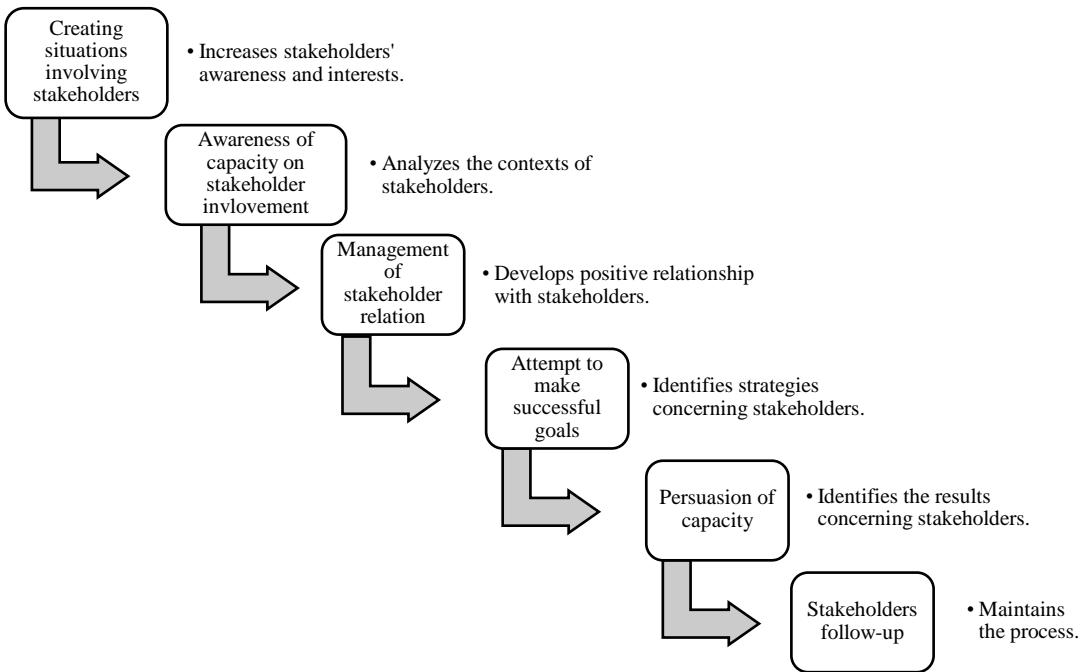
Strategic planning can provide suggestions on resource allocation in order to increase an organization's effectiveness in the long term (Landorf, 2009). To use these strategies, one must

consider the contexts, attitudes, perceptions, and impacts of the stakeholders (Kuvan & Akan, 2012), since strategic planning in the tourism industry needs to be consistent with stakeholders' needs. The idea of stakeholder management depends on policies, and an organization should understand and be able to respond towards stakeholders' necessities and needs (Yilmaz & Gunel, 2009). The main purpose of stakeholder management is to protect against negative effects caused by stakeholders towards the tourism business. An idea that plays a role in cooperative development is the awareness of differences in alliance (Mandell, 1999), and it also includes various techniques which the organization can apply (Yuksel, Bramwell, & Yuksel, 1999) such as issue analysis, consultation, strategic communication, and formal agreement.

Previous research shows stakeholder management that can be appropriately included the critical attributes of stakeholder management (Yilmaz & Gunel, 2009). The first principle emphasizes the recognition of stakeholders that executives should consider in order to value stakeholders' necessities and needs. The second principle refers to communication patterns that an organization should provide. This step can help the cooperation by reducing potential conflicts caused by stakeholders. The third underlines opinion reflection in the way that stakeholders reflect that their opinions might be different from what the organization expects. However, opinions should relate to a relationship between stakeholders and government policy or organization. The fourth principle highlights a balance creation where executives should equally consider risks and rewards among stakeholder differences, and fairly distribute benefits to each group of stakeholders. The fifth principle is concerned with the management of each sector in that organizations know how to deal with claims for each stakeholder, including government and private sectors. Claim management aims to reduce risks relating to organization performances. The sixth focuses on employees who are direct stakeholders towards the organization. Organizations should pay attention to their employees and protect them against risks that might occur at the present or in the future. The last principle reflects power of a decision maker where an organization should pay attention to a decision maker or a manager in order to create awareness towards disagreements involving stakeholders and organization. Disagreements might negatively or positively affect the organization's credibility.

In contrast, Waligo et al. (2013) argue that stakeholders would involve taking the interests and concerns of various groups, so they are all satisfied at least to some extent, or at least the most important stakeholders with regard to any given issues, are satisfied. Moreover, tourism industry is a sector of multiple, but related industries and so strategy operates at different tiers. Cooperation with stakeholders is important for strategic management to develop tourism (Chheang, 2009). Business must cooperate with government sectors, private sectors, and societies in order to consider factors and processes to support business. A recent study by Waligo et al. (2013) proposed the methods for stakeholder management to divide stakeholder into six steps called "multi-stakeholder involvement management", which are as follow:

- 1) Creating situations involving stakeholders: This step aims to solve main problems and deal with long-term problems that involve public sectors. Creating situations concerning stakeholders will help increase the awareness and the understanding of ideas through strategic communication with different stakeholders.
- 2) Awareness of capacity on stakeholder involvement: The second step of various stakeholders' management.
- 3) Management of stakeholder relation: the third step is a strategic process that needs to be integrated in order to cope with stakeholders with various perspectives.
- 4) Attempt to make successful goals: the process that supports strategic goals for stakeholders.
- 5) Persuasion of capacity: the fifth stage in this process identifies the level of strategic management through each different group of stakeholders such as a sustainable tourism group.
- 6) Stakeholder follow-up: the last step that supports strategic management through the review of practice and reward.



**Figure 2.** Framework of Stakeholder Management (Adopted from Waligo et al. [2013])

Overall, there seems to be some evidence to indicate that each step of stakeholder management aims to keep the relationship with each stakeholder in order to increase their motivation. Because of different perspectives, managing stakeholders' conflicts and agreements is also different (Kuvan & Akan, 2012). Sometimes, local residents are concerned about negative effects towards their cultures or negative environment impact resulting from tourism; therefore, it is necessary to understand tourism development with consideration for stakeholders (Dabphet et al., 2012).

Tourism business that is aware of the necessity of cooperation in tourism planning will create benefits for business potential and make business successful (Bornhorst et al., 2010). Moreover, if the business cooperates with the stakeholders by building relationships in different forms, it will benefit business (Jamal & Getz, 1995; Laing et al., 2009). Executives need to be aware of their processes in order to make the business more successful and they should also choose appropriate strategies that benefit stakeholders and business owners (Sautter & Leisen, 1999). Executives should consider strategic goals in order to make those goals correspond with set objectives, including following goals and objectives which are important for the success of cooperation in strategic planning (Bramwell & Sharman, 1999).

Appropriate strategies should focus on tourists' needs since in a service business, it is important to find what customers want and provide them with what they need. Moreover, finding what inspires the customers to buy or do things is also important, even though it is difficult to do (Sautter & Leisen, 1999). Stakeholder strategic management depends on many factors of management, including marketing, service quality, customer information, marketing relations, manufacturing, personnel management, and marketing rules. Savage et al. (1991) places importance on risks and capacity of cooperation between stakeholders and business organizations which help identify four strategies between stakeholders and business organizations:

Type 1: **Supportive Stakeholders** are those who support organization's goals. This group of stakeholders shows good management and low potential in risks. They exhibit high potential in working together. These stakeholders are mostly manufacturers and non-profit organizations. A strategy used with these stakeholders is **Involvement Strategy**.

Type 2: **Unimportant Stakeholders** are those who have low potentials in risks as well as low potentials in doing group work. A strategy used with this group is **Monitoring Strategy**.

Type 3: Non-Supportive Stakeholders are those who have high potentials in risks, but have low potentials in working together. This usually happens in big organizations, especially those organizations that have high competition and high number of employees. A strategy that is used with this group is Defensive Strategy.

Type 4: Agreeable Stakeholders are those who have high potentials in risks as well as in working together. This type of stakeholders is important for the organization. A strategy that is used with this group is Collaborative Strategy.

Savage et al. (1991) proposed organizational strategies through stakeholders' perspectives. A strategy that is appropriate for the Thai tourism businesses is a cooperative building strategy. This strategy can be effectively used with government sectors and local residents. Government sector can set up policies for development and provide basic framework to support business. If local residents agree with the government, the business can improve.

		Potential of Stakeholders to Threaten Organizations	
		High	Low
Potential of Stakeholders to Cooperate with Organizations	High	<b>A Cooperative Building Strategy</b> Stakeholders: governments, regional governments, tourist attractions, convention halls, members, chamber of commerce, universities, and sponsors	<b>A Linking Strategy</b> Stakeholders: local governments, resident committees, and restaurants
	Low	<b>A Protection Strategy</b> Stakeholders: None	<b>A Follow-up Strategy</b> Stakeholders: None

**Figure 3.** Main Organizational Strategies Used with Stakeholders  
(Adopted from Sheehan and Ritchie [2005])

Sheehan and Ritchie (2005) suggested that organizations should employ a cooperative building strategy with non-profit organizations, and use a linking strategy with local residents. However, Savage et al. (1991) suggested that a cooperative building strategy should be used with local residents, while a linking strategy is suitable for non-profit organizations. For other business sectors such as tourist attractions, hotels, or tourists, an organization should consider potential risks and potential areas of cooperation before choosing an appropriate strategy as shown in Figure 3.

Recently, researchers interested in Thailand's tourism development have called for consideration of both the importance and benefits of stakeholders. Table 4 shows seven factors that have an impact on stakeholders, involving environment, economy, social and culture, community's integration, education, rule, and tourist' satisfaction. Each factor involves different stakeholders; some factors involve stakeholders from every sector.

Factors	Types	Stakeholders
Environment	Impact on environment	Stakeholders from every sector
Economy	Growth of economy in each region or the increase of standard of living	Stakeholders from every sector
Social and culture	Impact on social and culture or analysis of culture	Stakeholders from every sector
Community integration	Community support or community self-reliance	Stakeholders from every sector
Education	Ineffective data	Local communities
Rule	Control tourism process and community	Local powerful persons
Tourists' satisfaction	Tourists' needs	Local communities

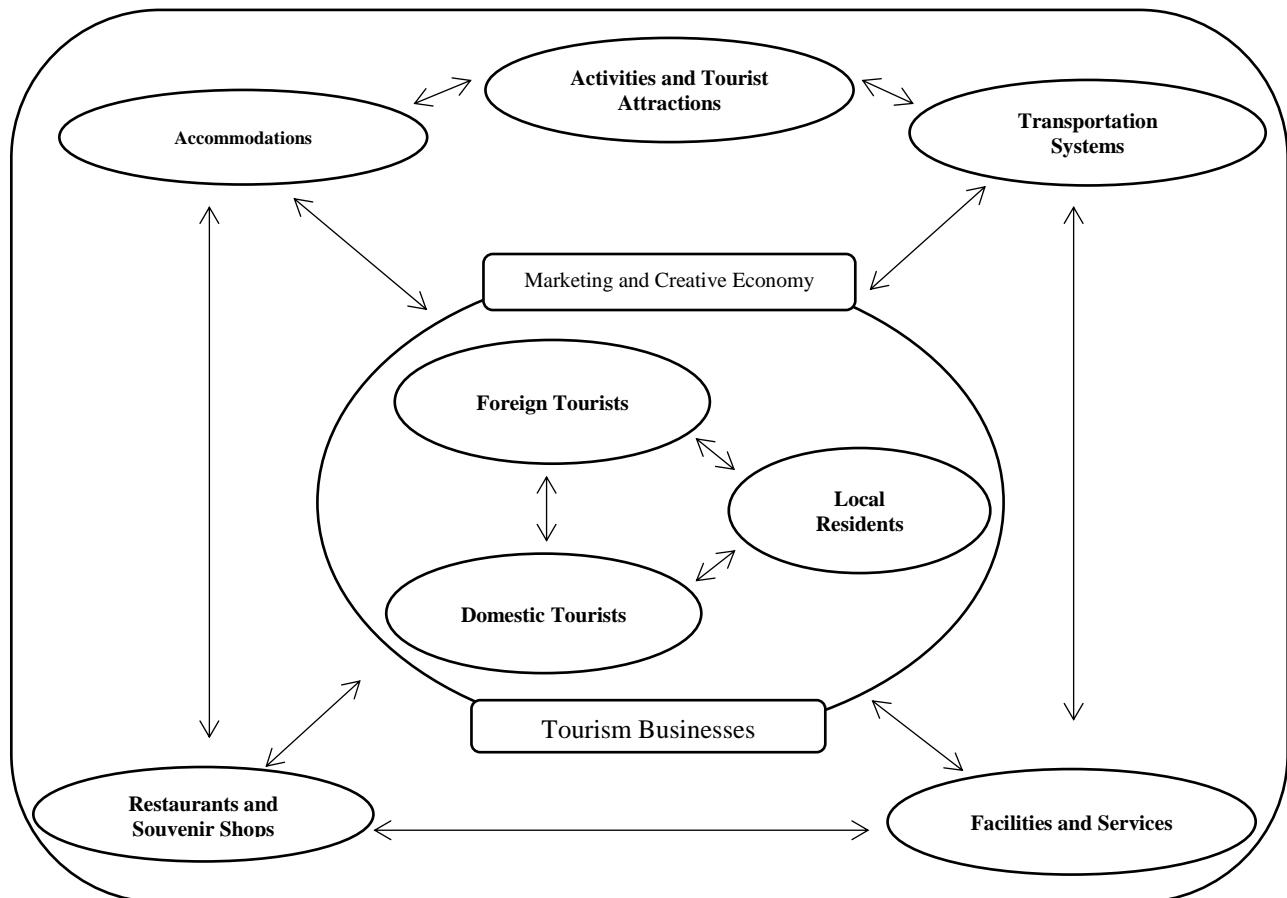
**Table 4.** Tourism Factors Affecting Stakeholders (Adopted from Dabphet et al. [2012])

Strategic management is the beginning of change for future situations and it helps the organization cope with change. Moreover, strategic management also promotes satisfaction towards Thailand tourism and it answers the needs of foreign tourists, domestic tourists, and local residents (Chaisawat, 2006) as shown in Figure 4.

Framework of policy and tourism planning in Thailand consists of many factors relating to marketing, creative economy, and tourism business and is fast becoming a key instrument in stakeholder management to business tourism. These factors relate to manufacturing factors: restaurant and souvenir shops, accommodation, activities and tourist attractions, transportation system, and facilities and services. Furthermore, local residents should introduce Thailand tourism through everyday living. Moreover, government sectors should make sure that tourists will be safe, as well as to provide appropriate facilities and information to them. According to Dabphet et al. (2012), local communities are significant tourism stakeholders in business. Therefore, if we want to enhance sustainable tourism, it is important that local residents be asked to be involved in tourism development in order to reduce negative effects, and increase positive effects towards tourism (Huttasin, 2008). Furthermore, Dabphet et al. (2012) found that the local communities influenced and shared control over development initiatives and the decisions. Without the support of local communities, the sustainability of tourism is uncertainty. Moreover, the cooperation in tourism planning can help business consider which issues might affect local residents, and local residents can help make a decision in order to bring it into practice (Pongponrat & Chanradoan, 2012).

Tourism activities should involve local activities. For example, ecotourism, this also involves local communities, and should be supported by the government (Seriwat, Prachumporn, & Chonlathorn, 2009). In order to create good cooperation in tourism management, stakeholders from private sectors should work together and be aware of the increasing satisfaction from many private sectors (Yodsawan & Butcher, 2012). Furthermore, the government sector can reward the organizations or private sectors that show high competence (Yodsawan & Butcher, 2012). According to Kontogeorgopoulos, Churjen, and Duangsaeng (2014), the support of stakeholders towards other stakeholders can increase benefits in tourism such as selling, exhibiting, and gaming (Pongponrat, 2011) by including an outside stakeholder: a leader of a government sector, a non-profit organization, or a private business (Kontogeorgopoulos et al., 2014).

Different stakeholders with their inconsistent interests make businesses complicated and confusing in tourism business. Consequently, in order to be successful, managers need to have the ability to combine heterogeneous expectations into an intelligible whole which fully supports corporate missions. To concentrate exclusively on maximizing returns to shareholders cannot be considered as the main and the only responsibility of managers. Therefore, resolution of the unavoidable conflicts between stakeholder groups and shareholder is the most significant and strategic responsibility of managers.



**Figure 3.** A Framework for Policies and Tourism Planning in Thailand (Adopted from Chaisawat [2006], Wattanacharoensila and Schuckert [2014])

### Conclusion

This article explained the perspectives of stakeholders which support strategic management planning in order to enhance the cooperation among stakeholders involved in Thailand tourism business. In doing business in tourism industry, executives should understand strategic management in every form so that they can choose appropriate techniques to support their business. It is obvious that an organization that does not employ appropriate strategies cannot be a leader in marketing or cannot receive expected profits. They also need to consult a professional in this field if they want their objectives to be met. Therefore, executives should not ignore strategic management which can cause effective working process. Executives need to create appropriate strategies for organizations and lead those organizations to success.

Strategic planners need to give importance to each type of stakeholders' perspectives. It is also important that businesses analyze each type of stakeholders who directly and indirectly impact business since each stakeholder has different characteristics and different needs. If executives know what their stakeholders want, they can cooperate with them or create a good relationship with them

and provide them with what they need. Therefore, it is important that executives understand stakeholders' perspectives and know how to work with them.

Furthermore, the present study makes several noteworthy contributions to choose strategies that are suitable for Thailand tourism business through the perspectives of stakeholders. Executives should appropriately use these strategies in order to reap the best benefit for their organizations. Since the idea of stakeholder management consists of many theories, more research relating to tourism through the eyes of stakeholders will help and benefit the tourism business in the future.

### **About the Author**

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