

## Research on conflicts in Cai Lay district, Tien Giang province, between local residents and stakeholders in community-based tourism development

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**Abstract:** The current research incorporates a qualitative approach to conduct in-depth interviews with 23 respondents, including 7 locals, 10 visitors, 2 employees of tourism-related businesses, and 4 government officials, in order to examine conflicts in the process of community-based tourism development in Cai Lay District, Tien Giang Province. The investigation essentially identifies three primary categories of conflict: environmental, social, and economic. Disproportionate benefit distribution is the fundamental root of economic conflicts; in the case of tourism, companies attempt to regulate both the flow of customers and profits, while local residents are provided with a restricted quantity of benefits. The sustainability of the community-based tourism model is threatened by the imbalanced competition between locals and business proprietors, as well as the unpredictability of taxi revenue. As a result of a lack of transparency in support policies, social conflicts arise between residents and the government regarding issues of disrespect, local culture, and historical inequality among tourist households. Environmental conflicts are frequently caused by tourists' detrimental effects, such as littering and businesses' overuse of resources, which degrade locals' quality of life. The study determines strategies to enhance cooperation between the relevant parties, guarantee equitable benefit distribution, and establish a framework for the long-term growth of community-based tourism in Cai Lay District.

**Keywords:** *Community-based tourism in Cai Lay District, Economic conflict, Social conflict, Environmental conflict, Stakeholder conflict, Tien Giang Province.*

### 1. Introduction

Community-Based Tourism (CBT), which maintains cultural heritage, generates more revenue, and improves the living conditions of locals, is becoming more and more prominent with models of local sustainable development. Nevertheless, implementing this paradigm into practice is certain to lead to conflicts of interest between, for example, locals, tourism operators, authorities, and visitors. Conflict in community-based tourism, according to Weaver [1] generally stems from an unequal distribution of responsibilities, resources, and rewards among the various interest groups. Negative effects on the destination's sustainable development may arise if these disagreements are not sufficiently resolved.

Cai Lay District, situated in Tien Giang Province, is one of the sites that aim at developing community-based tourism, aiming at enhancing the area's ecological features and garden landscapes, using the river culture as a means of generating income for the local community. However, as for its practice, this model has led to a series of economic, social, and ecological conflicts under implementation of this model and lesser cooperation among stakeholders and Great challenges for the sustainable tourism development of the region also generated.

Using a qualitative approach to gather data through in-depth interviews with locals and business people, officials, and visitors, this research intends to investigate tensions in the development of community-based tourism in Cai Lay District. The paper offers suggestions to lessen disputes, distribute benefits fairly, and promote the sustainable growth of community-based tourism in Cai Lay District based on the findings of the investigation.

## 2. Research Content

### 2.1. Theoretical Basis

#### 2.1.1. Community-Based Tourism

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) is type tourism that grows bottom-up, from the needs of the community aiming achieve conservation of resource and ponderadays development. The concept is also known as the community development tourism or community-based ecotourism [2]. CBT is therefore empowering local community to engage in tourism management and captures the benefits from its economic premisses more effectively for the benefit of local community [3]. Researches consider that the involvement at different levels of the community for the sustainability of development is key [4, 5]. CBT helps to conserve cultural values and heritage while promoting sustainable means of livelihoods for local peoples [6].

#### 2.1.2. Conflict

According to Thomas [7] conflict is a social phenomenon that can occur at several levels, ranging from individuals to organizations, and frequently starts when one side feels adversely impacted by another. According to Coser [8] conflict is an essential component of social relationships and can spur change. Nonetheless, other viewpoints contend that conflict has a detrimental effect on organizational and group operations [9]. Conflict is frequently linked to the allocation of resources or societal values and can manifest in a variety of ways, including interpersonal, intragroup, and intergroup conflicts [10]. In order to guarantee sustainable development, disputes between players in the tourism industry are unavoidable and require to be promptly resolved [11].

#### 2.1.3. Stakeholder

According to Freeman [12] well-known definition, the notion of "stakeholders" comes from economic studies and refers to groups or persons that either influence or are influenced by an organization's goals. Numerous stakeholder models have been established in the tourism industry, including the "Star" model by Roxas, et al. [13] and the "Dynamic Wheel" model by Buhalis and Fletcher [14]. Three major categories are identified by the UNWTO [15] VICE model: visitors, the tourism sector, and the local community. Four major stakeholder groups are highlighted in studies by Trần [16] and Trần, et al. [17]: government officials, tourists, tourism businesses, and citizens.

#### 2.1.4. Conflicts between Stakeholders

While community-based tourism benefits locals financially, it also raises the possibility of disputes with stakeholders including visitors, companies, and government agencies. These disputes frequently result from disparities in finances, cultural values, and interests. Residents initially embrace tourism, nevertheless as visitor numbers increase and local resources are overused, conflicts arise, according to Doxey [18] IRRIDEX model. Conflict arises mostly from cultural differences between locals and visitors, such as filthy conduct or the encroachment of private areas [19]. When enterprises and tourists take advantage of local resources and spaces, resource conflicts occur [20, 21]. Discontent in communities is also a result of economic disputes and disproportionate benefit distribution [11, 22]. Sustainable growth requires equitable benefit-sharing and effective management.

## 2.2. Research Methodology

Conflicts between locals and those involved in the growth of community-based tourism in Cai Lay district are investigated utilizing a qualitative methodology. This approach collects comprehensive information concerning the viewpoints and experiences of diverse stakeholders by combining in-depth interviews with field observations.

The following individuals participated in in-depth interviews: two local tourism enterprises, four representatives from government agencies and local authorities, ten tourists on community tours, and seven local inhabitants engaged in community-based tourism.

In addition to providing stakeholders a chance to freely express delicate concerns and pinpoint the underlying causes of disputes, interviews aid in gathering information on conflict situations from a variety of viewpoints. In order to record stakeholders' natural interactions and behaviors in authentic environments, field observations were carried out throughout both peak and off-peak seasons [20].

To guarantee variety and representation among significant stakeholder groups, the sample strategy combined purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques. Through referral associations, the sample was enlarged to include people who were directly involved in conflict situations. A greater comprehension of the origins and effects of conflicts was made possible by theme coding, which was used to examine the collected data. Therefore, the data was gathered until it was saturated, which means no new, noteworthy themes or information surfaced.

**Table 1.**  
Summary of Conflicts Between Local Residents and Stakeholders.

Type of conflicts	Main conflicts	Relevance
Economic conflicts	Inequitable allocation of profits	Locals - Tourism businesses
	Unfair competition between tourism enterprises and locals	Locals - Tourism businesses
	Unsustainable economic worth	Locals - Government - Tourism businesses
Social conflicts	Conflicts between local residents and the government	Residents - Local authorities
	Conflicts between visitors and locals	Residents - Tourists
	Disputes among local tourism-related enterprises	Residents - Residents
Environmental conflicts	Tourists' detrimental effects on the environment	Residents - Tourists
	Conflicts over resource conservation between communities and tourism companies	Residents - Tourism businesses
	Conflicts in the community over waste management	Residents - Government - Tourism businesses

## 2.3. Conflicts in Cai Lay District, Tien Giang Province, Between Local Residents and Stakeholders in Community-Based Tourism Development

In Cai Lay District, community-based tourism has been expanding and strengthening the local economy along with generating employment. The sustainability of this approach has been impacted, nevertheless, by the many disputes that have arisen between residents and stakeholders as a result of the exploitation of tourism.

Economic, social, and environmental conflicts are the three principal conflict groupings that are summed up in the table below, along with substantial issues and stakeholder interactions. In particular, disagreements about profit sharing, rivalry between locals and enterprises, and threats to the viability of the hospitality sector are all examples of economic conflicts. Internal competition among tourism enterprises, cultural conflicts between inhabitants and tourists, and disputes over tourism management between local authorities and residents are several instances of social conflicts. disputes over waste management in the local community, the detrimental effects of tourism, and corporate resource exploitation are the main causes of environmental disputes. In order to guarantee the sustained growth of community-based tourism in Cai Lay District, it is essential to clearly define these problems and suggest suitable solutions.

### 2.3.1. Economic Conflicts

#### 2.3.1.1. Inequitable Distribution of Revenues

The disparate distribution of profits between communities and tourism enterprises is one of the major obstacles to the growth of community-based tourism in Cai Lay District. When financial advantages are not dispersed equitably, the local community tends to lose interest in participating, which ultimately results in the failure of the community-based tourism concept, according to investigations by Tosun [3] and Goodwin and Santilli [5].

A significant portion of the visitor flow in Cai Lay District is managed by tour operators, who exclusively interact with a small number of well-connected residences; many others are left out of the tourism value chain. Due to this, there is a biased system of benefits that denies locals an equal chance to engage in the tourism sector. According to a local tour guide:

*"Particularly, the tour operators choose residences with a solid commercial connection. Reaching tourists remains an extremely challenging procedure for new families who want to engage in community-based tourism. Located in Ngu Hiep Commune in Cai Lay District, the information was provided by a 38-year-old tour guide" (Interview with a local tour guide, 38 years old, Ngu Hiep Commune, Cai Lay District, 2025)".*

The income inequality causes damage to both resident financial security together with a threat to long-term survival of community-based tourism. Only selected homes receive benefits while most community residents remain excluded from participation which can trigger mounting internal conflict between households and result in passive opposition to community-based tourism within the area.

#### 2.3.2. Inequitable Competition Between Tourism Businesses And The Local Residents

In addition to the problem of sharing benefits, local residents are also confronted with the problem of facing a lot of difficulties in facing tourism trade, caused because of big gaps in investments, management abilities, access into market. It has been mentioned by Chung and Nguyen [23] that if local communities do not receive support from government or intermediate bodies, tourism enterprises will threaten the market, control market tourism production chain, otherwise people will stay in a passive and dependent position.

In fact, in Cai Lay district, when local people plan to take their own tourism services such as transportation by rowing benches on the canals, they are manners coerced by companies cutting off to the customers the price of service.

*"We used to plan a boat rowing trip on the canals, but the tourism industry developed a more affordable package to attract customers. They have a lot of money, yet we can't match their wealth." (An interview conducted in 2025 with a 50-year-old boat services operator in Tan Phong commune, Cai Lay district.)*

This situation threatens two significant risks: (1) residents residually are forced to abandon their businesses and return to their activities of farming or undertaken lower-income opportunities, and (2) the community-based tourism starts to fall into control of businesses, winning out over its autonomy inside the community. Without price control measures and support for residents to be successful tourists, community-based tourism model in Cai Lay district will continue to commercialize in favour of businesses more than the community.

#### 2.3.3. Unsustainable Economic Worth

Apart from competition which tricks local residents in Cai Lay district are not enjoying a piece of the income of city tourism industry is unsustainable. According to Butler [24] destination life cycle model, if there misses the long-term plan of destination, it perhaps has the rapid increase, but also has the quick decline along with tourist's preference change or the fluctuation of the tourism hornet nest.

In recent years, locals in Cai Lay district find it tough to make ends meet when the number of tourists drops during the off-peak months:

*"We can make money during the busiest time of year, but there aren't many tourists during the off-season time. We must go back to traditional farming without tourists, yet tourism has already displaced a large portion of our*

*old agricultural area.” (Interview with a 55-year-old household in Ngu Hiep commune, Cai Lay district, 2025) that is involved in community-based tourism.*

The vulnerability of the community tourist economic model is evident in this state. Residents are left in a difficult situation when agricultural land is converted into a tourist destination but the tourism industry is unable to produce steady revenue streams. Tourism is not robust enough to become a long-term source of income, and it is also impossible for agriculture to return to its former state. Cai Lay area may experience a long-term drop in tourism values if it does not have policies that are adequate for resource allocation and supportive of complementing economic growth.

Economic conflicts in community-based tourism development of Cai Lay district delineate a conflict of power, benefit, and market among stakeholders. As companies dominate all tourist traffic, residents are driven to exploitation and devoid of economic stability. Without suitable government management and supportive policies from the government for the community, the community-based tourism model at Cai Lay is in danger of losing its emancipation and sustainability that causes low participation from local community and negative future development of the destination.

### 2.3.2 Social conflicts

#### 2.3.4. Conflict Between Local Residents and Authorities

One of the major reasons for the conflict between residents and local authorities in community based tourism development is the non transparent policies and licensing process. According to Ngoc [25] the mismatch between policy and implementation could erode public trust and cause residents to feel disaffected in the tourism development, being left out of the policy process. This has a negative impact on the involvement of the community and undermines the sustainability of community-based tourism.

Numerous residences in Cai Lay area seek to increase the number of homestays they offer in order to accommodate the demand from tourists, yet they encounter challenges with the licensing process. An owner of a homestay voiced frustration:

*“That’s what the government states regarding helping the tourism industry, yet we run into problems when we try to expand our a lodging facility. We have no idea what policy we are violating.” (Speak with Tan Phong Gemeente, the 42-year-old housekeeping proprietor in Cai Lay neighborhood, 2025).*

As a result, locals eventually lose faith in tourist policies, which lowers their enthusiasm to participate in collaborating with the local government to enhance tourism. This disagreement may hinder the development of community-based tourism and prevent the area from realizing its full tourism potential if prompt action is not taken.

#### 2.3.5. Conflict Between Local Residents and Tourists

In addition to confrontations with the authorities, variations in culture and conduct between local inhabitants and tourists also lead to numerous issues. When tourism reaches a certain stage, locals may become less hospitable and more resistant if visitors disregard their culture and surroundings, according to [18].

Some visitors to Cai Lay District are still unaware of the need of respecting local households' private property. One local expressed frustration:

*“People who live in my residence end up entering my garden without permission. Without being asked, they pick up and eat the fruit in our garden. I’m offended.” (Remark from a 39-year-old homestay host in Ngu Hiep Commune's Cai Lay District, 2025).*

If it remains unremitting, locals will gradually turn against tourists impacting the all-around travel experience in a negative way. Lack of adequate measures to manage tourist behavior and install respect in local culture may compromise the destination’s reputation and decrease the whole value of community-based tourism.

### 2.3.6. Conflict among Tourism Related Business Households in the Community

Besides conflict with the authorities and tourism-related patrons, unhealthy competition of tourism business households among the latter is a major problem. As pointed out by Murphy [26] a successful community based tourist model must follow a fair distribution of the tourist, avoid the specific benefits concentrating between a few individuals-and hence unevenness within the community.

Some tourism business households in Cai Lay district are well-related with tour operators or receive more promotion, others are not. This gives rise within the community to a bottleneck between the two; as one local resident said:

*"While certain households have no visitors, others are well-promoted. We are not introduced to tourists by tour operators, however some families are." (Interview with a 47-year-old proprietor of a locally owned tourism company in Tan Phong commune, Cai Lay district, 2025).*

As a result, community fragmentation erodes the communally-based core, which is one of the most important aspects of community-based tourism. Unfair competition can damage community cohesion, deprive quality service, and negatively impact the destination's long-term viability if there is no single management mechanism in place to ensure fairness.

Interest disagreements, cultural disparities, and unequal access to development prospects are the primary drivers of social conflicts in Cai Lay district's community-based tourism development. These disputes could become major obstacles to the long-term growth of community-based tourism if local authorities fail to put in place suitable management policies, visitors fail to receive cultural norms guidance, and the community fails to establish an equitable framework for sharing benefits.

### 2.3.7. Environmental Conflicts

#### 2.3.7.1. Tourists' Detrimental Effects on the Local Environment

If not adequately controlled, an upsurge in visitors may significantly strain the environment, especially with regard to garbage disposal and resource exploitation. Tsaur, et al. [20] found that tourism's detrimental effects on the environment might result in the depletion of natural resources, which eventually lowers the quality of the visitor experience and has an influence on locals' livelihoods.

In actuality, a large number of visitors to Cai Lay are ignorant of environmental preservation, which results in littering and the careless exploitation of natural resources. One local citizen expressed their worries:

*"Visitors only stop to see the sights after that they eat their meals and then discarding garbage throughout the area. I have repeatedly informed them yet several persons continue being unaware." (A local resident aged 52 presented this opinion during my interview in the Ngu Hiep Commune region of Cai Lay District in 2025.)*

The biological ecosystem will continue to deteriorate without waste management strategies and tourism awareness efforts, which will impact not solely the natural scenery but also lessen the destination's appeal. Tourists profit from the natural environment while also contributing to its degradation, creating a vicious cycle.

*Tourism businesses struggle with local residents for control of resource preservation issues.*

Business tourism operations which overuse natural resources create conflicts between local residents about water resources utilization. Unrestrained tourism operations strain natural resources primarily affecting groundwater reserves as reported by Chung and Trần [27] which has detrimental effects on the existence of local residents.

Multiple tourism operations in Cai Lay district expanded their services by increasing homestays and restaurants and entertainment establishments which created both excessive water usage and depletion of groundwater resources. A local resident expressed frustration:

*"Entire resort operations along with restaurant and homestay businesses consume an excessive amount of water during dry season. Regular usage and irrigation demands exceed water supplies in the dry season" (An interview with a local resident who is 58 years old and lives in Ngu Hiep commune, Cai Lay district 2025).*

Such disputes demonstrate how economic advancement takes precedence over safeguarding natural resources for protection. Local authorities who fail to strengthen resource regulations will trigger future problems because depleting water sources will negatively impact both resident welfare and business operations which ultimately results in substandard tourism services.

Environmental conflicts in community-based tourism development in Cai Lay district stem from tourists' lack of awareness and uncontrolled resource exploitation by businesses. The sustainability of community-based tourism faces significant danger when there is no environmental protection strategy and insufficient resource usage regulations which will hurt locals and the tourism sector permanently.

### 3. Conclusion and Recommendation

Three principal categories of conflicts have been discovered by the study on conflicts in the development of community-based tourism in Cai Lay district: environmental, social, and economic. These disputes present serious obstacles to the model's long-term viability in addition to influencing locals' involvement in community-based tourism.

An imbalance of benefits distribution, negative impacts from business activities on residents and the economic stability of destinations that heavily rely on tourists create the main economic conflicts between stakeholders. The tour company dominance creates problems for local residents who struggle to access their own market which weakens the abilities of community-based tourism to operate independently.

Diverse interests and cultural outlooks between residents, government and tourist visitors and community members cause social tension. Illnesses related to low transparency in administrative policies create distrust between residents and public officials and cultural differences between visitors and locals result in neighborhood resistance toward tourism programs. Local tourism businesses that participate in unfair competition create major obstacles to promote sustainable development practices.

Environmental conflicts origin from tourism sector impacts and from uncontrolled business activities that deplete natural resources. Tourism activities accompanied by inadequate environmental awareness among visitors along with enterprise-generated excessive water usage and ecological exploitation have raised significant pressure against the destination's natural environment which jeopardizes the future sustainability.

Local governments must set up a just system for allocating benefits, give locals access to the tourism industry, increase tourists' understanding of environmental issues, and rigorously control resource exploitation in order to end these conflicts. In order to balance the interests of all parties involved and guarantee the long-term growth of community-based tourism in Cai Lay district, cooperation between the government, corporations, and the community is essential.

### Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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