



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***DEVELOPMENT OF CRITERIA AND INDICATORS FOR SUSTAINABLE
ECOTOURISM RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN PENANG NATIONAL
PARK, MALAYSIA***

MARZIEH FALLAH

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By

MARZIEH FALLAH

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

DEVELOPMENT OF CRITERIA AND INDICATORS FOR SUSTAINABLE ECOTOURISM RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN PENANG NATIONAL PARK, MALAYSIA

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December 2014

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The Penang National Park (PNP) is one of the few natural heritage sites located in the northwest corner of Penang Island. It was officially declared a national park in April 2003. The site covers an area of about 1,266 hectares of coastline hills with many exclusive features. With the rapid influx of visitors, PNP is facing several threats of various degrees in ecotourism development, such as poor disposal of solid wastes, flora, and fauna loss, lack of public social involvement or participation and low environmental consciousness among the visitors. Thus, criteria and indicators are effective tools for evaluating and assessing its sustainability. However, up to now, there is still no clear image of the criteria and indicators (C&I) of sustainability index for managing ecotourism in the PNP. Prioritizing C&I set makes it easier for managers to monitor and assess the sustainability of ecotourism management in the park. In terms of time and expenses, the fuzzy model developed for assessing the ecotourism management in the park is a flexible and could easily update the model with new knowledge.

The objectives of this study were (1) to identify the important of sustainability C&I for the management of ecotourism in PNP; (2) to develop a hierarchy model of sustainable ecotourism management of PNP through C&I; and (3) to assess the sustainability of ecotourism management in PNP. Methodologically, a panel of 30 academic and non-academic experts in sustainable tourism, ecotourism, and forestry management helped to identify C&I using modified Delphi Technique, and this was followed by conducting the inter-rater reliability (Content Validity Ratio) test. The next step was the application of Fuzzy Analytic Hierarchical Process (FAHP), which is a Multi Criteria Decision Making (MCDM) method through engaging five experts from academic and non-academic fields to prioritize the most important criteria and indicators and to establish the hierarchy model of C&I.

Fuzzy Inference System (FIS) was employed in the final step based on certain indicators as inputs by applying Matlab software. The real value, minimum value, and maximum value of each indicator obtained through reports and interview with experts. The membership function of each indicator was established through Matlab software and 169 rules were established for the whole system. A sensitivity analysis

was conducted to identify the most effective indicator in determining the sustainability level of the park. In phase one, the modified Delphi technique revealed a consensus of 9 criteria and 21 indicators for the ecotourism management of PNP. The C&I are as follows, ecological dimension (three criteria and six indicators), social dimension (three criteria and seven indicators), economical dimension (two criteria and four indicators), and institutional dimension (one criterion and two indicators). In phase 2, four dimensions of ecological, social, economic, and institutional criteria and indicators were prioritized. In ecological dimension, the criterion of conservation of biodiversity and its sole indicator, the number of threatened species, were found to be the most important criterion and indicator. In the social dimension, the criterion of visitor safety, and its sole indicator, the number of trained, skilled, and dedicated staff in the park were found to be the most important criterion and indicator. In economic dimension, criterion community's economic improvement, and its sole indicator, number of tourism businesses and services operated and owned by the locals was found to be the most important C&I, and in institutional dimension, its sole indicator, number of stakeholders involved in park's management was the most important indicator. Consistency Ratio (CR) for each pairwise comparison was calculated and it was less than 0.1 (< 0.1).

The 9 criteria and 21 indicators encompass all the different dimensions of environmental, social, economic and institutional, which were associated with sustainable development concept. In addition, the ecological dimension has the highest priority and institutional cooperation dimension has the lowest priority. An overall sustainability of ecotourism management in PNP indicated that more than 50% was considered medium level of sustainability of the park. In conclusion, this set of C&I would serve as an instrument for monitoring ecotourism activity and evaluating the sustainability of ecotourism management in PNP by the Department of Wildlife and tourism organization in Malaysia. Prioritizing C&I with MCDM ensures that the most important tool in assessing the ecotourism management in PNP and the FIS was used to identify the level and status of sustainability of ecotourism management in the park.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PENILAIAN KEMAMPAHAN PENGURUSAN EKOPELANCONGAN DI
TAMAN NEGARA PULAU PINANG, MALAYSIA**

Oleh

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Taman Negara Pulau Pinang (TNPP) merupakan salah satu daripada tapak warisan semula jadi yang terletak di sudut barat laut Pulau Pinang. Ia diisytiharkan secara rasmi sebagai Taman Negara pada bulan April 2003. Taman Negara ini meliputi kawasan seluas 1266 hektar yang terdiri daripada kawasan pesisiran pantai yang berbukit serta beberapa ciri-ciri yang khusus. Dengan peningkatan jumlah pengunjung, TNPP menghadapi beberapa ancaman dalam pembangunan ekopelancongan seperti pelupusan sisa pepejal yang lemah, kehilangan flora dan fauna, kekurangan penglibatan sosial daripada orang awam dan kesedaran alam sekitar yang rendah di kalangan pengunjung. Oleh itu, ciri-ciri dan petunjuk merupakan alat yang berkesan untuk menilai dan mengkaji kemampuan TNPP. Walau bagaimanapun, sehingga kini, masih tiada imej yang jelas mengenai ciri-ciri dan petunjuk (C&P) kepada indeks kemampuan dalam pengurusan ekopelancongan di TNPP. Pengutamaan set C&P memudahkan pengurus untuk mengawasi dan menilai kemampuan pengurusan ekopelancongan di taman negara. Dari segi masa dan perbelanjaan, model fuzzy telah dibangunkan untuk menilai pengurusan ekopelancongan di taman negara dan merupakan model yang boleh lentur serta mudah untuk ditambah nilai dengan pengetahuan baharu.

Objektif kajian ini adalah (1) untuk mengenal pasti kepentingan kemampuan C&P dalam pengurusan ekopelancongan di TNPP; (2) untuk membangunkan model hierarki kemampuan dalam pengurusan ekopelancongan di TNPP melalui C&P; dan (3) untuk menilai tahap kemampuan pengurusan ekopelancongan di TNPP. Secara kaedahnya, panel yang terdiri daripada 30 pakar akademik dan bukan akademik dalam bidang pelancongan mampan, ekopelancongan dan pengurusan hutan terlibat dalam pengenalpastian C&P; dengan menggunakan teknik Delphi yang diubahsuai, dan ini diikuti dengan menjalankan ujian kebolehpercayaan inter-rater (Nisbah Pengesahan Kandungan). Langkah seterusnya adalah menjalankan proses analisa hierarki fuzzy (PAHF), dimana ianya tergolong dalam kaedah Penentuan Keputusan Pelbagai Ciri (PKPC). melalui penglibatan 5 orang pakar dari bidang akademik dan bukan akademik untuk melaksanakan pengutamaan ciri-ciri dan petunjuk yang paling penting dalam mewujudkan model hierarki C&P.

Sistem Penyimpulan Fuzzy (SPF) telah digunakan di langkah terakhir berdasarkan petunjuk tertentu sebagai input dengan menggunakan perisian Matlab. Nilai sebenar, nilai minima dan nilai maksima setiap petunjuk yang diperolehi adalah melalui laporan dan temubual dengan pakar-pakar. Fungsi keahlian bagi setiap petunjuk telah diwujudkan dalam perisian Matlab dan sebanyak 169 peraturan telah ditetapkan bagi keseluruhan sistem. Analisa kepekaan telah dijalankan untuk mengenalpasti petunjuk yang paling berkesan dalam penentuan tahap kemampunan taman negara. Dalam fasa pertama, teknik Delphi yang diubahsuai telah menghasilkan sembilan ciri-ciri dan 21 petunjuk bagi pengurusan ekopelancongan Taman Negara Pulau Pinang. C&P adalah seperti berikut, dimensi ekologi (tiga ciri dan enam petunjuk), dimensi sosial (tiga ciri dan tujuh petunjuk), dimensi ekonomi (dua ciri dan empat petunjuk), dan serta dimensi institusi (satu ciri dan dua petunjuk).

Dalam fasa kedua, empat ciri dan petunjuk dimensi iaitu ekologi, sosial, ekonomi dan institusi telah diberikan keutamaan. Dalam dimensi ekologi, ciri pemuliharaan kepelbagaian bio dan petunjuknya, jumlah spesies yang terancam telah dikenalpasti sebagai ciri-ciri dan petunjuk yang paling penting. Dalam dimensi sosial, ciri keselamatan pengunjung dan petunjuknya, bilangan kakitangan yang terlatih, mahir dan berdedikasi di taman negara telah dikenalpasti sebagai ciri-ciri dan petunjuk yang paling penting. Dalam dimensi ekonomi pula, peningkatan ciri ekonomi komuniti dan petunjuknya, bilangan perniagaan dan perkhidmatan berasaskan pelancongan dikendalikan serta dimiliki oleh penduduk tempatan menjadi ciri dan petunjuk yang paling penting, manakala dalam dimensi institusi pula, pihak berkepentingan yang terlibat dalam pengurusan taman negara telah ditentukan sebagai petunjuk yang paling penting. Nisbah Ketekalan (NK) bagi setiap perbandingan secara berpasangan telah dikira dan nilainya adalah kurang daripada 0.1 (<0.1).

Sembilan ciri dan 21 petunjuk merangkumi semua dimensi yang berbeza seperti alam sekitar, sosial, ekonomi dan institusi, telah dikaitkan dengan konsep pembangunan lestari. Di samping itu, dimensi ekologi mempunyai keutamaan yang tertinggi manakala dimensi kerjasama antara institusi mempunyai keutamaan yang terendah. Kemampunan pengurusan ekopelancongan di TNPP secara keseluruhannya menunjukkan bahawa kemampunan taman negara berada pada tahap sederhana iaitu dengan peratusan melebihi 50%. Kesimpulannya, set ciri dan petunjuk (C&P) boleh digunakan sebagai alat untuk memantau aktiviti ekopelancongan dan penilaian kemampunan pengurusan ekopelancongan di TNPP oleh Jabatan Perlindungan Hidupan Liar serta organisasi pelancongan di Malaysia. Pengutamaan Ciri-ciri dan Petunjuk (C&P) bersama dengan Penentuan Keputusan Pelbagai Ciri (PKPC) memastikan bahawa peralatan yang paling penting dalam penilaian pengurusan ekopelancongan di TNPP serta SPF digunapakai sepenuhnya dalam penentuan tahap dan juga status kemampunan pengurusan ekopelancongan di taman negara.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 18 December 2014 to conduct the final examination of Marzieh Fallah on her thesis entitled "Development of Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Ecotourism Resource Management in Penang National Park, Malaysia" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

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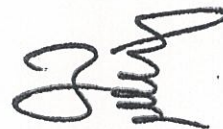
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5.20	Output for social principle system	109
5.21	Output for economic principle system	111
5.22	Output for Institutional system	112
5.23	output for overall sustainability system	113



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AHP	Analytic Hierarchy Process
C	Criteria
I	Indicator
C&I	Criteria and indicators
CES	Compendium of Environmental Statistics
CITES	Convention on Internationally Traded and Endangered Species
CR	Consistency ratio
CSD	Commission on Sustainable Development
DWNP	Department of Wildlife and National Park Malaysia
DM	decision maker
EF	Ecological Foot Printing
FIS	Fuzzy Inference System
FAHP	Fuzzy Analytic Hierarchy Process
FL	Fuzzy Logic
IISD	International Institute for Sustainable Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MCDM	Multi Criteria Decision Making
MDCs	More Developed Countries
MOTAC	Ministry of Tourism and Culture
NES	National Ecotourism Strategy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
NT	Nearly Threatened
PNP	Penang National Park
SAFE	Sustainability assessment by fuzzy evaluation
SD	Sustainable development
TIES	International Ecotourism Society
UNCED	United Nation's Conference on Environment and Development
UN	United Nations
WCED	United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development
WTO	World Tourism Organization

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Ecotourism as a term referring to a particular concept of tourism was first used in the late 1980s in the context of environmental preservation and sustainable development (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996; Coria & Calfucura, 2012; Diamantis, 1999). Ecotourism is broadly defined as tourism experiences that care for the integrity of the biophysical environment, providing for economic viability and social responsibility in the long term (Hall, 2011; Pegas & Castley, 2014; Singh, 2012). It supports environmental conservation of threatened natural areas as well as generating economic opportunities (Agardy, 1993; E. Boo, 1990; Burton, 1998; Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996; Dixon et al., 2003; Gössling, 1999; Honey, 1999; López, 2002; Miller & Kaae, 1993; Wall, 1997; Western et al., 1993; Zhang & Lei, 2012). Ecotourism therefore becomes a noteworthy subject in the tourism industry (Vincent & Thompson, 2002; Weaver & Lawton, 2007) and is recognized as a sustainable way to develop regions with abundant tourism resources (Weaver, 2001; Zhang & Lei, 2012).

Ecotourism has grown steadily over the last few years (Goodwin, 1996; Torquebiau & Taylor, 2009) registering a growth rate of 10 -125% annually. i.e., 300% faster than the average growth rate for the whole tourism industry (IES, 2008) and the major players are mostly developing countries with flora and fauna that are both rare and under threat and endangered that see ecotourism as a great opportunity for economic development through sustainable development (Brooks et al., 2006; Coria & Calfucura, 2012).

However, in recent years, ecotourism has faced some challenges, especially since the notion of ecotourism is still to be adequately defined while guidelines about which opportunities are involved as ecotourism, and which are not have still to be formulated (Sander, 2012). Ecotourism would destroy the natural resources upon which it depends, especially when management is poor (Mieczkowski, 1995; Stabler, 1997). Therefore, ecotourism is not only an opportunity but also a challenge for sustainability of reserves (Li, 2004).

There is concern that ecotourism will perform in much the same way as mass tourism only degrading the resources at a slower rate (Bauer, 2001). Ecotourism sites can be situated in highly sensitive and vulnerable environments, some of which cannot endure even moderate levels of usage, and which often have minute or no infrastructure at all (Butler, 1999). Previous studies also indicate significant shortcomings in the field, including equity disparities in local income and employment; dilution of local culture; limited revenue accruing to the destination country, protected area and local communities; and loss of economic diversity (Honey, 2008; Weaver, 2001). Ecotourism initiatives aim to minimize the negative impacts generated by the tourism industry (e.g. commodification of local cultures) (Bramwell & Lane, 1994). However, require critical examination to assess their overall sustainability (Doan, 2011; Pegas & Castley, 2014).

In addition, existing ecotourism activities may provide benefits for conservation, but are not comparable to the costs involved in the conservation of the protected areas concerned. Hence, current ecotourism activities have not met the expectations of the protected area managers. The role that ecotourism can play as a conservation strategy depends on the strategies designed by protected area managers to consider the cost and benefits and manage the ecotourism sites sustainably from the environmental, social and economic contexts (López, 2002).

1.2 Problem statement

The Penang National Park (PNP) situated in Northern Peninsular Malaysia offers many unique features such as the Meromictic Lake, turtle sanctuary, and so forth. These features are potential opportunities for ecotourism activities (Hong & Chan, 2010a). According to the reports from the Wildlife and National Park Department of Penang National Park, visitor numbers increased from 21,768 in 2004 to 115,915 in 2013 with 4% growth, rate annually (figure 1.1).

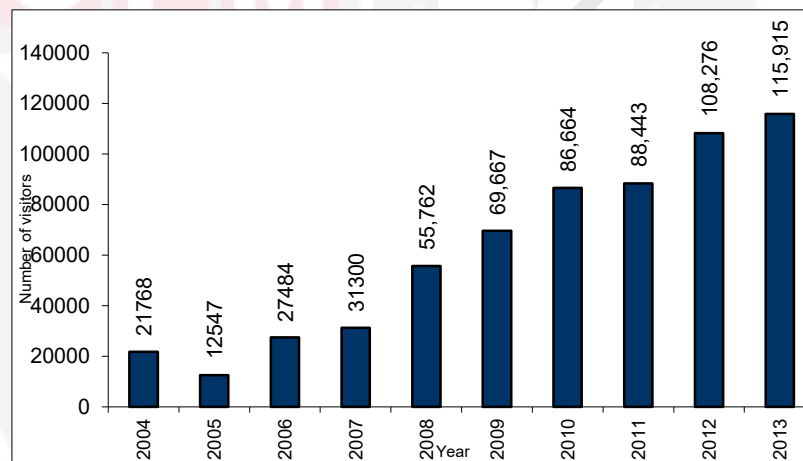


Figure 1.1 Total Number of visitors to PNP (2004 -2013)

Source: Department of Wildlife and National Park in PNP

Along with the rapid influx of visitors, PNP is facing several threats of various degrees in ecotourism development. According to Hong and Chan (2010a) the most serious threat is solid waste management, which is affecting the PNP's image. This is because of the absence of a waste management policy, inadequate disposal system, and low environmental consciousness among the visitors.

In addition, the park has been facing some serious environmental threats pertaining to flora and fauna loss (Hong & Chan, 2010b). According to some reports due to illegal poachers, there have been some cases of species loss such as the clouded leopard. Moreover, there have been reports of turtle eggs being stolen from the beaches, which will endanger of the long-term survival of these amphibians (Lee & Leong, 2003). Ignorant or irresponsible visitors have also damage flowers, flowering plants, and stolen ornamental plants from the National Park. The reason for such acts could be the low level of environmental awareness among the park visitors. Chan, Chan, et al. (2004) stated that some places have also been illegally planted with fruit trees, spices and flowers as well as vegetables. This may disrupt or affect the forest ecosystem, due to clearing activities because of these illegal activities, which also include illegal farming. Additionally, Ang (2006) stated that some foreign workers have used mist

nets to trap birds and bats for food. Even worse is the fact that the mist nets were laid at the border of the forest in the Meromictic Lake, which could in turn threaten the existence of the wildlife in the area. In addition, due to shortage of land, private property-owners on the margins of the park may engage in activities like agriculture, housing development, and tourism development and infringe parkland. These encroachments can be observed at the Paya Terubong hills which have been cleared for the building of apartments but which have subsequently led to environmentally negative consequences such as flash floods and hillside erosion and landslides (Chan, 1997; Hong & Chan, 2010a). Soil erosion, pollution, and flagging of the adjacent slopes are the other threats of encroachment into the PNP, which weakens the structure of the adjacent Teluk Bahang Dam. As long as encroachment causes deforestation, this might also have adverse impacts on the ecosystem of the forest. According to (Chan, Wan, et al., 2004) farming activities are closely related to the development of the hill land. Be it legal or illegal, farming activities involve deforestation and replacing virgin forest with planted crops. This might cause a major increase in soil erosion rate (Chan, Chan, et al., 2004).

In terms of social cooperation, the concern is associated with the lack of public social involvement or participation (Hong & Chan, 2010a). Unfortunately, the local community has not been given any involvement, directly or indirectly in the management of PNP. While Lepper and Schroenn (2010) and Coria and Calfucura (2012) have specified that ecotourism management must involve the local community by way of employment opportunities in development projects, and building community capacity by involving communities in the tourism industry, management of natural resources, and the enrichment of locals to enhance the attraction of the destination.

All these negative evidences mention indicate that there are serious challenges in the ecotourism management of the Penang National Park. Considering the facts that PNP is a sensitive protected area, there are major challenges for ecotourism management besides the increasing number of visitors while no consideration appears to have been given to investigate the carry capacity of the Park. Another issue of concern is the general lack of environmental education and awareness, which may have serious impacts on the sustainability of ecotourism in this park.

According to the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987), a sustainable development is defined as a development that will contribute to the enhancement of the economy, preserve and must improve the efficiency of the economy, protect and re-establish damaged ecologies and generally bring improvement to the well-being of all (IISD, 1993; WCED, 1987). Assessment of sustainability implies management, including careful estimation of the level of sustainability, and clearly developed plans and strategies for stakeholders and administrators to ensure the sustainability level of a project (Kommadath et al., 2012). Therefore, there is a need to assess the sustainability of ecotourism management in PNP to help managers prevent damage to the Park, which will diminish the impact of the recreational usage image of the Park.

1.3 Research Objective

The general Objective: “To assess the sustainability of ecotourism management of the Penang National Park”.

Specifically this study is designed to:

1. Identify important sustainability criteria and indicators for management of ecotourism in PNP
2. Develop a hierarchy model of sustainable ecotourism management of PNP through criteria and indicators;
3. Assess the sustainability of ecotourism management in the Penang National Park.

1.4 Research questions

To meet the specified objective, the following research questions are proposed:

What are the appropriate sustainability criteria and indicators for ecotourism management in PNP?

1. Have all experts arrived at a consensus (inter-rater reliability) in the last round of the Delphi survey?
2. What is the hierarchy for identified sustainable criteria and indicators?
3. Which are the most effective criteria and indicators?
4. Are all experts' opinions consistent with the FAHP model?
5. What is the sustainability fuzzy model for criteria and indicators?
6. What are the rules for fuzzy modelling of sustainability in PNP?
7. How much of the park is environmentally, socially, economically, and institutionally sustainable?

1.5 Significance of the Study

In the tourism industry, Ecotourism has gained more attention in Malaysia compared to the other types of tourism such as urban tourism, rural tourism and others. Following the development of ecotourism in Malaysia, the Ministry of Tourism and Culture (Previously, the ministry of Culture, Art, and Tourism), Developed the national ecotourism plan in 1996 to assist the government in developing the potential ecotourism. Apart from that, the development of indicator is very important in dealing with environmental issues such as Compendium of Environmental Statistics (CES) that is used as a tool to monitor pollution, depletion, and degradation of environmental quality. It is very important because Malaysia has many natural resources as tourist attractions. In addition, Malaysia is one of the 12 Mega diversity in the world that accepts the importance of preserving its social, environmental, and cultural wealth heritage. According to the Bellagio Principles, ‘indicators’ and ‘standardized measurements’ (principle 5) are needed for evaluating the sustainable development. Similarly, Agenda 21 provides an action-oriented strategy for the implementation of sustainable development at a local level, also highlights the urgent need to monitor progress explicitly referring (in chapter 40) to the employment of indicators for sustainable development (UN, 1993).

Therefore, it becomes necessary to suggest a complete methodology to develop and identify criteria and indicators for evaluation of Ecotourism management.

Comprehensive criteria and indicators identified in the economic, ecological, social, and institutional aspects and the most important criteria and indicators were selected to be used practically in the process of ecotourism management. This study uses appropriate tools like Modified Delphi technique, Fuzzy Analytic hierarchical process, and fuzzy inference system with experts' knowledge in the fields of environment, social and economy to propose a suitable planning framework for ecotourism management in Penang National Park. This framework is useful for monitoring, assessment, and efficient planning of future ecotourism management. In addition, it is also useful to analyse change patterns of the sustainability of the park in time durations. The outputs of this study can assist decision making for future development of the study area.

This research formulates an integrated approach for finding the best criteria and indicators as a tool for evaluation and assessment of ecotourism management and for future sustainable development of ecotourism in the national parks. The methodology is expected to be brief with a set of guidelines and recommendations for organizing and expressing the complexities found sustainable approach of ecotourism management. To-date there is no published for criteria and indicators for ecotourism management in PNP and application of Fuzzy Inference system in evaluation of ecotourism management.

Identified criteria and indicators can be used for future monitoring and evaluating the Penang National Park. The fuzzy inference system can be practiced as a tool designed for policy-makers to predict the future actions on sustainability and set up better decisions and policies for sustainable management of ecotourism. Therefore, with this model policy-makers can evaluate existing sustainability and project future sustainability of either other national parks or recreation areas, regarding how to identify criteria and indicators and to evaluate the level of sustainability. Fuzzy rules are important outcomes of fuzzy systems, which could be used as a framework for managers and decision makers for defining a framework for managing and monitoring the park.

Assessing of sustainability is difficult to undertake with conventional recognized methods due to the inherent uncertainties and ambiguities. This study proposed the use of a 'sustainability assessment framework, through fuzzy logic based methodology, which is recommended for the assessment of the sustainability of ecotourism management of the Penang National Park. By explaining sustainability as a function of a number of variables and in combination with expert opinions, numerical values of sustainability for each dimension and the overall sustainability as a result are calculated. This is an applicable and functional method of current existing sustainability assessment practices. The model is not rigid and users can select the set of indicators and modify the rules of any knowledge base according to their needs and the nature of the socio-environmental system to be evaluated Thus, this method might be modified to evaluate other parameters like poverty, inequality, human development index etc., besides sustainability of areas other than ecotourism management.

1.6 Scope of the study

This research has focused on addressing the following research statement:

“Efficient and applicable sustainability model for monitoring and assessment of ecotourism management for Institutional, Social, Ecological and Economical sustainability in the National Park”. The main approaches in this study are using Modified Delphi Technique (MDT) and Fuzzy Inference System (FIS) to develop a sustainability framework for monitoring the ecotourism management. As the case study, the Penang National Park, Malaysia has been considered. In this research the sustainability index for ecotourism in PNP is established. This sustainability index is compatible with United Nation World Tourism Organization indicators for sustainable tourism. The details are presented in chapter 4. The most important criteria and indicators have been chosen from different fields of environment, social and economic through experts in Malaysia. This study area was chosen based on several reasons. This is the first national park gazette under the National park Act (1980). It has some unique features like Meromictic lake and turtle sanctuary, with several ecological types of beaches. The Park is undergoing rapid influx of visitors, influenced by some challenges like waste management and flora and fauna extinction, land encroachment. However, it needs urgent sustainable plan for evaluating and assessment. Some other researches were done in this study area. Arifin (2008) did research about Perception of stakeholders and Hong and Chan (2010) conducted a SWOT study on PNP.

1.7 Framework for sustainability Indicator

The first step for organizing the selection and development of indicators to measure true sustainability is to establish a framework. Sustainability frameworks give form and direction to the environmental, social, and economic activities. Nevertheless, it must be recognised that framework by itself is an imperfect tool for organizing and expressing the complexities and interrelationships encompassed by sustainable development. Ultimately, the choice of a framework and a core set of indicators must meet the needs and priorities of users.

The framework employed in this study is based on four pillars of sustainable development used in UNCSD work program focusing on themes and sub-themes for the selection of sustainable ecotourism indicators (figure 1.2). The early indicator work under CSD organized the chapters of Agenda 21 under the four primary dimensions of sustainable development—social, economic, environmental, and institutional. Indicators first became a subject for attention from the tourism sector, as a response to the global focus on sustainability stimulated by the Brundtland Commission (1986) and the Rio Earth Summit (1992). Selected indicators will be developed within the context of the goals and objectives of the destinations, and important as potential performance measures for progress towards planned goals. The goal of sustainable development for tourism and the destinations has become increasingly accepted, thus provide the framework for the identification and evaluation of indicators. Identified indicators are not an end in themselves; they are specific tools for a broader process of planning for tourism. This indicator system for ecotourism helps managers to monitor the changes in sustainability over time. It promotes sound environmental and social practices, encourages transparency and accountability, and contributes to positive development impacts. More specifically, to

develop a framework for the sustainability index, the following factors are used as a guide- (a) country recommendations; (b) the inclusion of common priority issues relevant to assessing sustainable development progress; (c) the desire for comprehensiveness and balance across the sustainable development spectrum, as reflected in Agenda 21; and (d) limiting the number of indicators to achieve a core set.

A successful framework should reflect the connections between dimensions, themes, and subthemes. It should implicitly reflect the goals of sustainable development to advance social and institutional development, to maintain ecological integrity, and to ensure economic prosperity. Following this resolution, the resulting structure presents the indicators under four major dimensions, further broken down into themes and sub-themes. Therefore, the four primary sustainability dimensions (social, economic, environmental, institutional) are retained for this study based on: 1) relevant to assessing sustainable development progress; 2) understandable, clear, and unambiguous, to the extent possible; 3) within the capabilities of national government to develop; 4) conceptually sound; 5) limited in number, but remaining open-ended and adaptable to future needs; 6) broad in coverage of Agenda 21 and all aspects of sustainable development; and 7) dependent on cost effective data of known quality.

In the criteria selection, the expert panel relied particularly on factors such as feasibility to measure; relevance to national sustainable development priorities; and sub-theme to represent specific needs related to sustainable development priority setting, policymaking, monitoring, and evaluation.

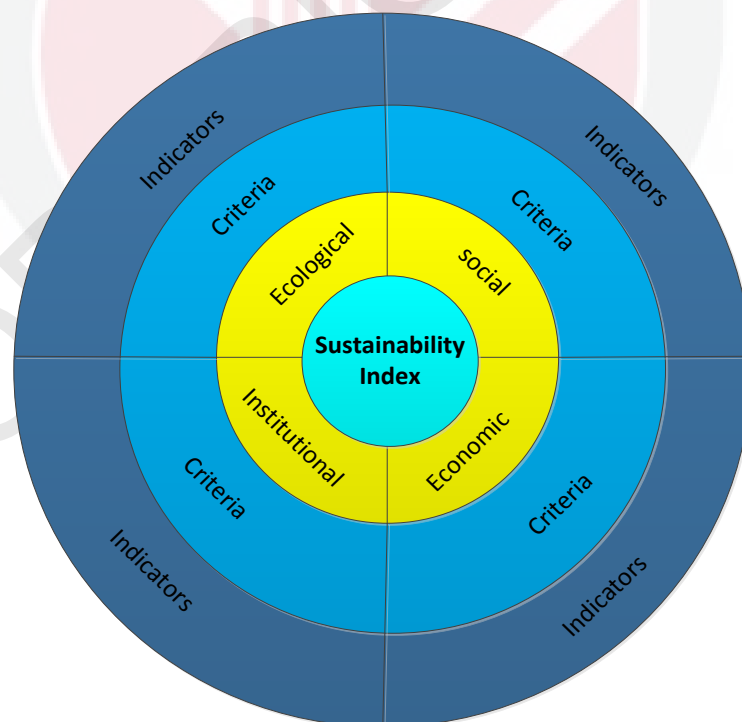


Figure 1.2 Sustainability index based on UNCSA framework

1.8 Thesis Organization

This section presents the organization of this thesis. It reviews the related literature available on the sustainability, sustainability criteria and indicators and ecotourism. The present study aims at identifying sustainability criteria and indicators for ecotourism management in the Penang National Park in Malaysia. Subsequently the sustainability of ecotourism management will be measured by fuzzy inference system. The organization of the contents of Chapters 2 to 6 are as follows:

Chapter 2 is a perspective and introductory discussion on the study area, PNP, and its geographical position, natural resources, geophysical, biological, and recreational characteristics, and also its ecological and social potentials and threats. Chapter 3 reviews the background information related to this study. The common terminology that is employed in sustainability and ecotourism is introduced. Several previous studies that used the models are also discussed. In Chapter 4, the material and methods used in this study will be described. The procedures of Delphi techniques, providing the instrument, data collection, qualification of expert panels will be described. Furthermore, the procedures of Fuzzy Analytic Hierarchy Process (FAHP), preparing the questionnaire, data collection, and finally procedures of Fuzzy Inference System (FIS), and interviews with experts are introduced. Developing the fuzzy inference engine is described. This chapter also provides a description of the study area.

Chapter 5 reports the results and discussions of the four rounds of Delphi technique, consensus analysis, as well as the results of the FAHP matrices and developing the hierarchy for the identified criteria and indicators and calculating the consistency ratio (CR). Finally, the results of FIS and final model for sustainability of ecotourism management and subsequent sustainability rules are discussed. Chapter 6 provides the conclusions drawn from the research and recommendations for future study.

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