

An Ecotourism Scenario Game for Tripartite (Teaching, Learning and Research) Enhancement in Tourism Study

Supported by: Teaching Development and Language Enhancement Grant (TDLEG), CUHK, 2016-19

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Introduction

With the rapid development of information and communication technology and e-learning, the conventional lecturing and knowledge transfer also have to incorporate innovative ways of teaching and technological advancements. **Game-based learning** is not new and has widely applied to various academic disciplines. Tourism studies often integrate field visit and classroom lecturing but a **virtual and scenario-based experience in some real-life cases** benefit both instructors and learners to stimulate discussions about circumstances of tourism planning and management.

The **Ecotourism Scenario Game** is an educational platform which simulates an indigenous community in the Amazon rainforest in Peru. Combining conceptual/theoretical knowledge, real world information and hypothetical storyline, this game allows students to make decisions in different scenarios in the development process. Instructors may deliver knowledge of ecotourism such as **tourism impact assessment, destination planning and visitor management** at certain stages of the game. Some common dilemmas between different parties are designed along the storyline and the students are encouraged to critically think and justify their decisions in attempt to balancing the multi-stakeholders' interests and achieving sustainable tourism development.

This game significantly **integrates conventional lecturing, class interactions and e-learning application to tourism classes**. The platform also allows students to experience the scenarios outside classroom, either individually or group-based, which would enhance the learning effectiveness.

Platform



Figure 1. Mario is hesitating which party is reliable for the development.

In Figure 1, the community has no experience on ecotourism development, so they are considering to seek help from possible “experts” and the player has to make decisions.



Figure 2. community members are complaining the disturbance of tourism.

In Figure 2, the player encounter internal disputes from the community. The player has to manage the tourists in order to minimize the disturbance of tourists to the community members.

The player should balance the interests from various parties but it is also important to maintain the attractiveness of the destinations. In Figure 3, for example, by failing to do so, the tourists feel disappointed and will not revisit the community anymore or may even discourage other people.

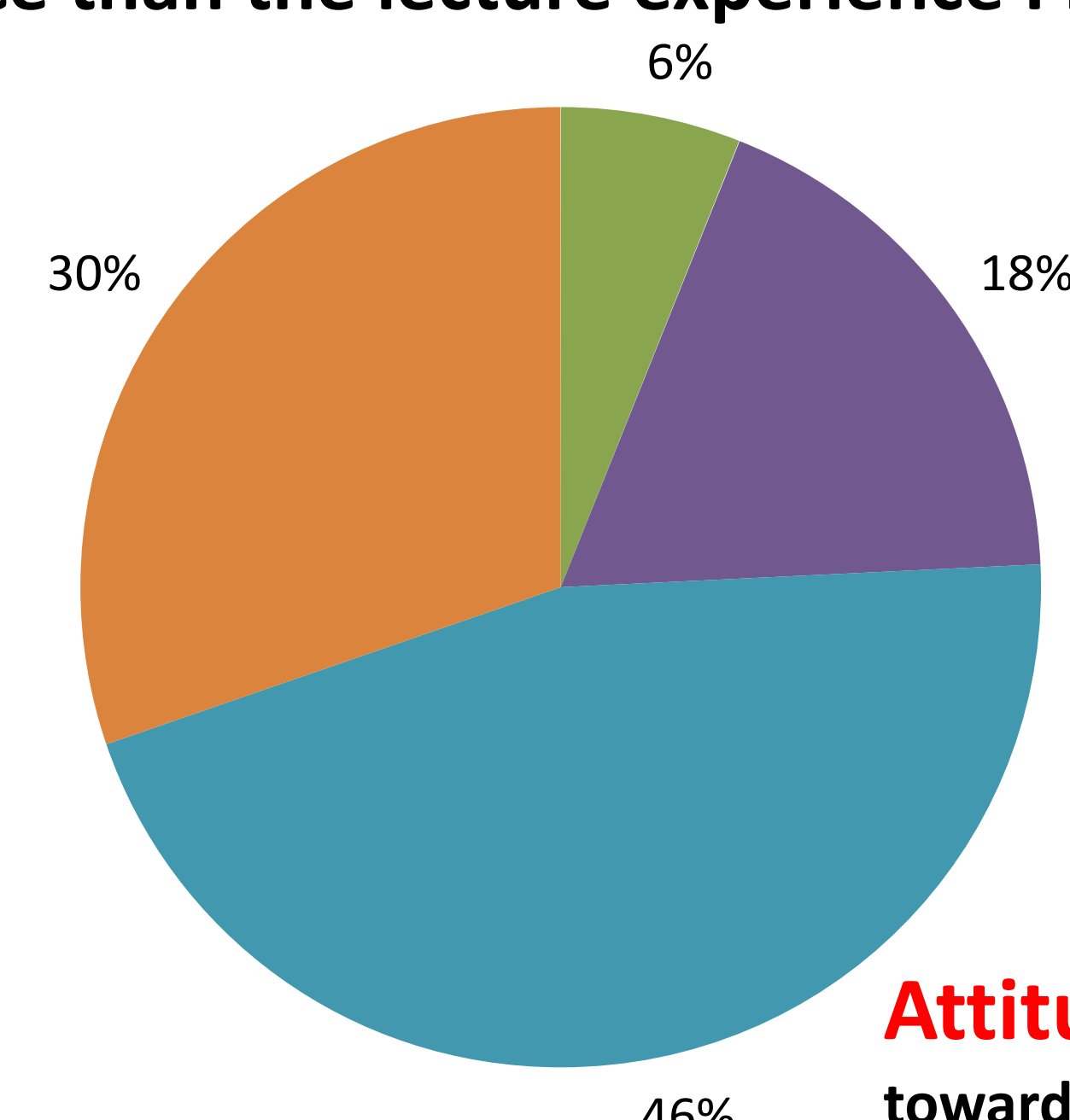


Figure 3. Tourists are disappointed due to the poor management of the community.

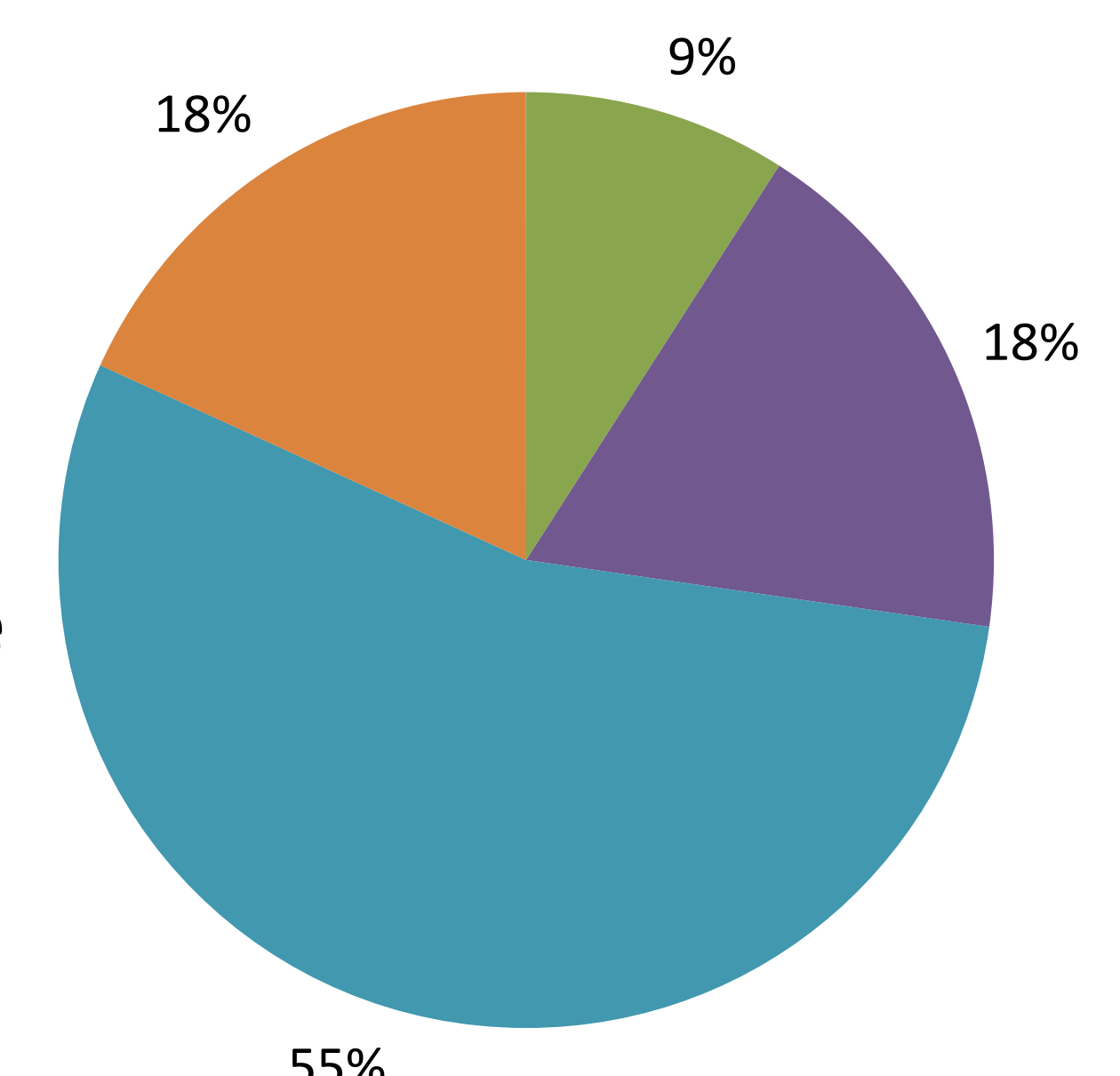
In-class Survey

The in-class questionnaire-based survey (n=33) was conducted in formal lectures. Female respondents have 72%. Individual respondents are from diverse academic backgrounds and over 87% of them had not taken any course that is related to ecotourism or tourism before. In general, the responses of the in-class survey are positive in terms of three dimensions of knowledge attained, attitude built-up and usability during the game.

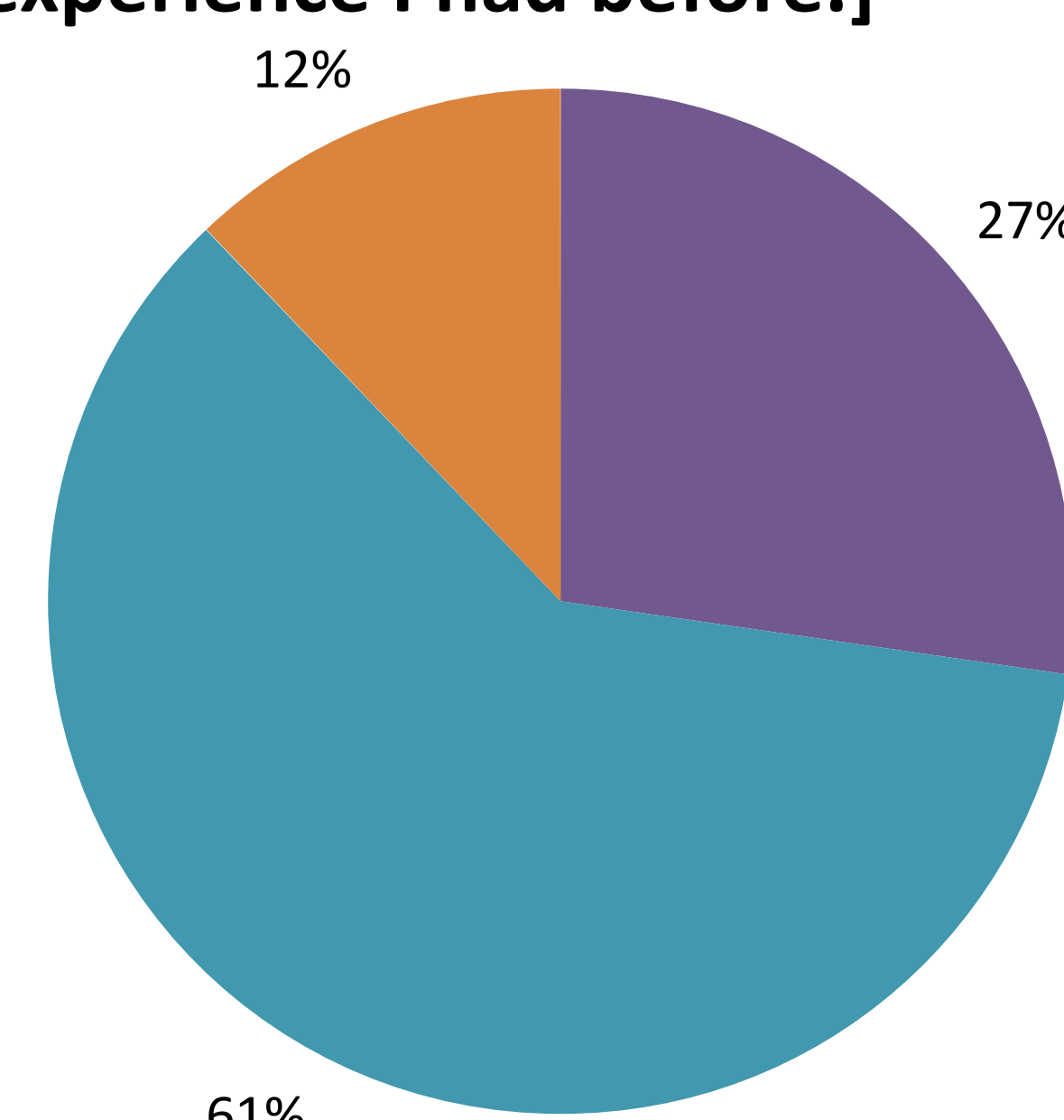
Knowledge [Overall, I learn more from this game experience than the lecture experience I had before.]



Attitude [Overall, I build up a more positive attitude towards ecotourism from this game experience than the lecture experience I had before.]



Usability [Overall, I think this game experience is more useful than the lecture experience I had before.]



Legend for all charts:
 ■ Strongly Disagree
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Slightly Disagree
 ■ Slightly Agree
 ■ Agree
 ■ Strongly Agree