

Enhancing Teaching and Learning Experience in General Education through an Online Ecotourism Scenario Game

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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-based learning **integrates conventional lecturing, class interactions and e-learning application to tourism classes** and has the potential to lead to attitudinal changes by simulating and presenting real-world environments such as how **tourism may cause negative environmental impacts** on a destination as well as **appreciating the cultural difference** between indigenous and urban citizens. 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. Maya is hesitating how to start ecotourism within the community.

In Figure 1, since some community members do not understand the benefits of ecotourism, the organizers are thinking if they should start it from a small group of the community.



Figure 2. Community members are introducing the traditional dance of the community to the tourists.

In Figure 2, the players have to make a decision if the community should present their traditional dance or pop music to the tourists. The player should balance the interests from various parties but it is also important to maintain the attractiveness of the destinations.

In Figure 3, in some cases, conflicts between different community stakeholders may be raised which would influence the ecotourism development and the players shall consider the interests of different stakeholders.

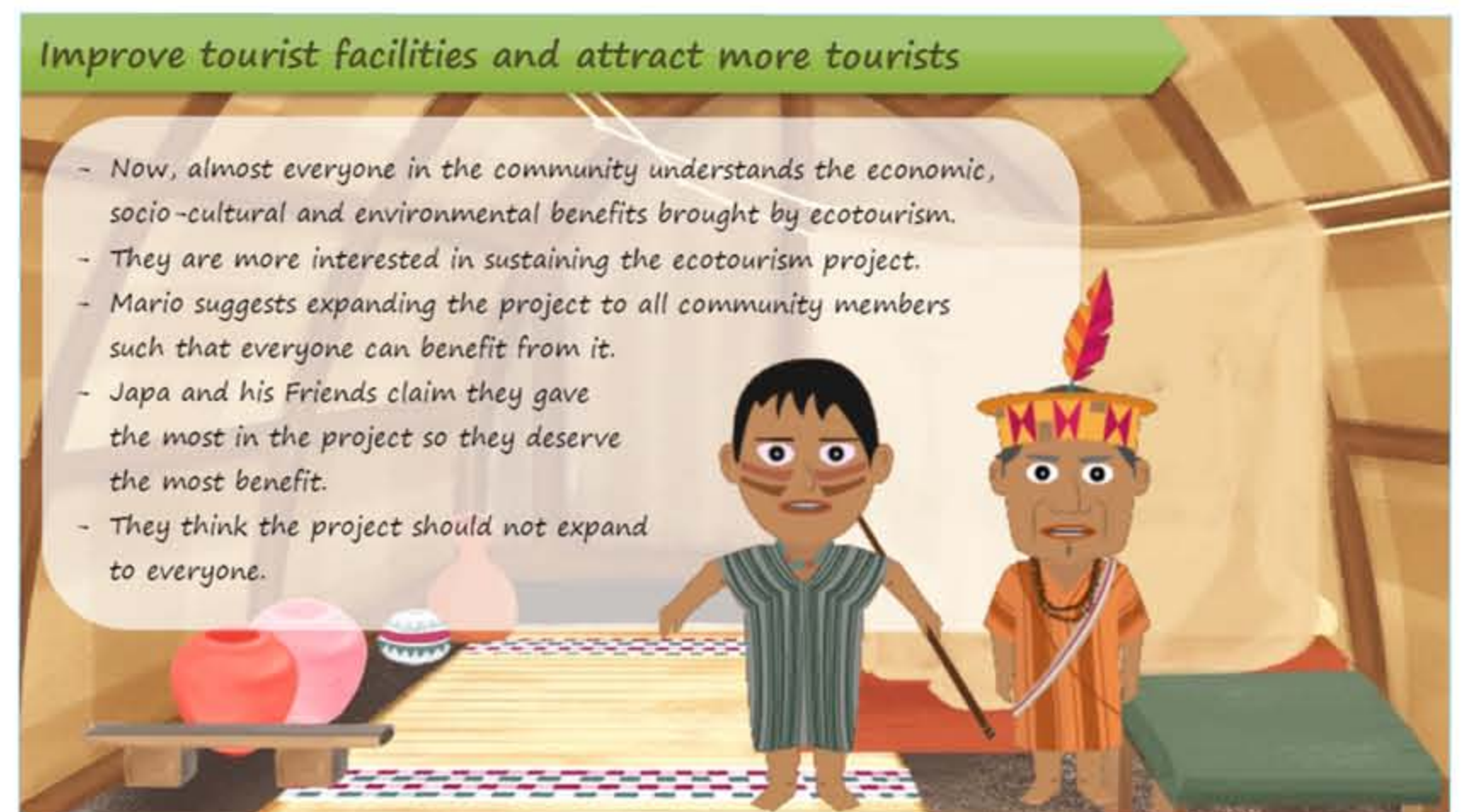
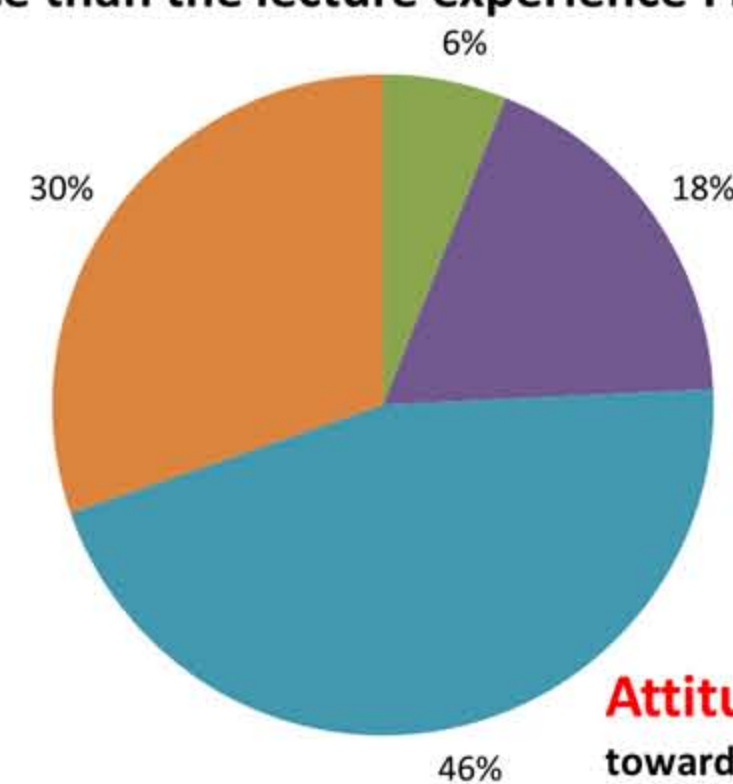


Figure 3. Conflicts between community stakeholders may be raised.

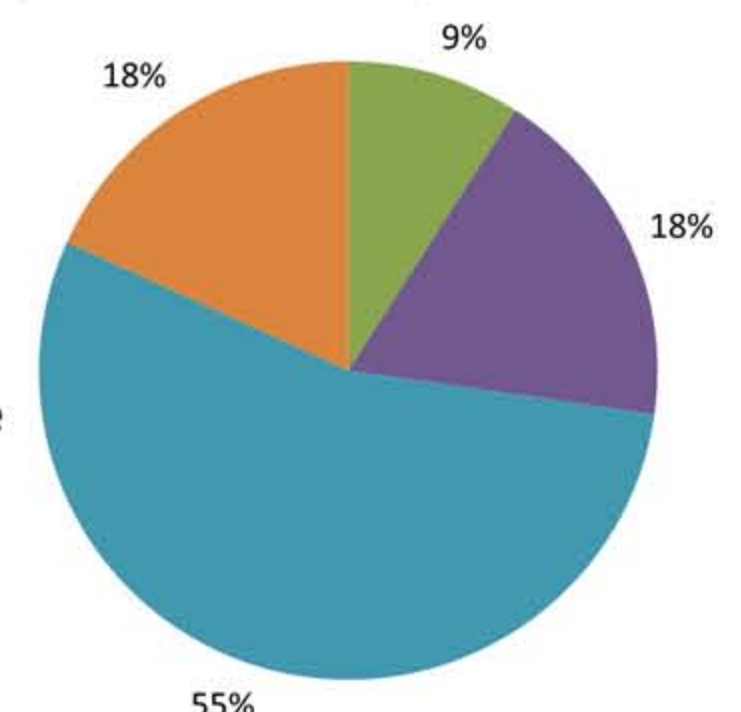
In-class Survey

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.

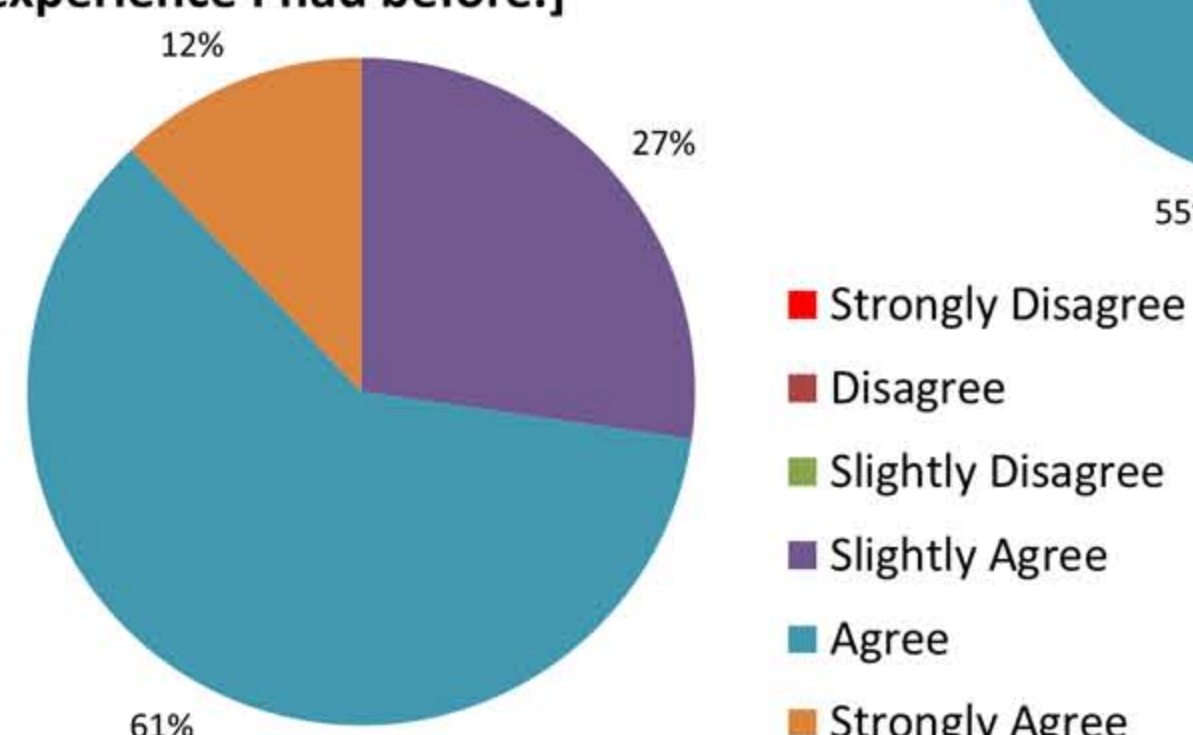
Knowledge [Overall, I learn more from this game experience than the lecture experience I had before.]



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.]



■ Strongly Disagree
■ Disagree
■ Slightly Disagree
■ Slightly Agree
■ Agree
■ Strongly Agree