NEGLECTED STAKEHOLDER GROUPS: CONCEPTUALISING A DYNAMIC MODEL FOR NEGLECTED STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS AND ENGAGEMENT

Anne Hardy*, Mark Wickham**, Ulrike Gretzel***

Abstract

Stakeholder analysis is well-established as a means by which policy makers and organisations gauge the interests of their salient stakeholders. This paper explores the application of stakeholder theory to 'neglected stakeholders' and explores the risks involved in assuming that disparate stakeholder groups lack power. This paper uses two case studies of Recreational Vehicle users whose interests and power were underestimated during a strategy development process. The rapid responses and formation of power of this neglected group via social media highlights the changes in stakeholder interactions that have emerged with the use of the Internet. They also demonstrate that managers and policy makers must now utilise iterative stakeholder analysis techniques that are reactive, and which respond to previously neglected stakeholder groups.

Keywords: Stakeholders, Dynamic Model, Stakeholder Analysis, Stakeholder Theory

**Tasmanian School of Business and Economics, University of Tasmania*
***Corresponding Author. Tasmanian School of Business and Economics, Locked Bag 16, University of Tasmania, Tel: +61 3 6226 2159*
Fax: +61 3 6226 2808
Email: Mark.Wickham@utas.edu.au
****University of Wollongong*

Introduction

Stakeholders have been defined as 'any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of an organisation's objectives' (Freeman, 1984, p. 46). Identifying and involving stakeholders in management decisions is widely advocated within the management and tourism literature (Cheng, Hu, Fox and Zhang, 2012; Hardy and Beeton, 2001; Jamal and Getz, 1999; Sautter and Leisen, 1999; Yuksel et al., 1999). Recently, stakeholder analysis models have been developed which add depth to stakeholder analysis application, prompting decision makers to consider the level of power and interest of stakeholders groups in relation to particular issues. These models work well when applied to existing and well-established stakeholder groups, which can be seen by their application within a variety of industry contexts. However, the emergence of new technologies such as social media has facilitated communication and supported the empowerment of neglected stakeholder groups. For this paper, 'neglected' groups include those whose existence has not been identified by decision makers or those whose characteristics have not yet been ascertained. This paper explores the ramifications of 'neglected stakeholders' when attempting to make policy decisions affecting Recreational Vehicles users (RVers) in Australia and Canada.

Stakeholder Theory

Donaldson and Preston (1995) state that Stakeholder Theory comprises three essential elements: the first relates to descriptive/empirical outcomes of Stakeholder Theory, which is the ability of the theory to describe the characteristics and behaviour of an organisation or system and its stakeholders. It explains the relationships which exist outside the organisation. The second element is also an outcome which they describe as instrumental, whereby the connections between stakeholders and corporate objectives are explored. The third aspect may be regarded as a normative, moral approach as opposed to an outcome, and is an assumption that all stakeholders have a right to participate if they have an interest in an organisation or an issue It has been argued that stakeholder concerns, goals and values must be included in strategic planning and are integral to managing destinations in a successful manner (Bornhorst, Ritchie and Sheehn, 2010; Robson and Robson, 1996). In a tourism context, this includes stakeholders such as tourists, residents, business owners and local government officials (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2002; Hardy and Beeton, 2001). Both Byrd (2007b) and Hardy and Beeton (2001) have argued that the final moral element identified by Donaldson and Preston (1995) is crucial in the context of tourism: stakeholder involvement must begin with

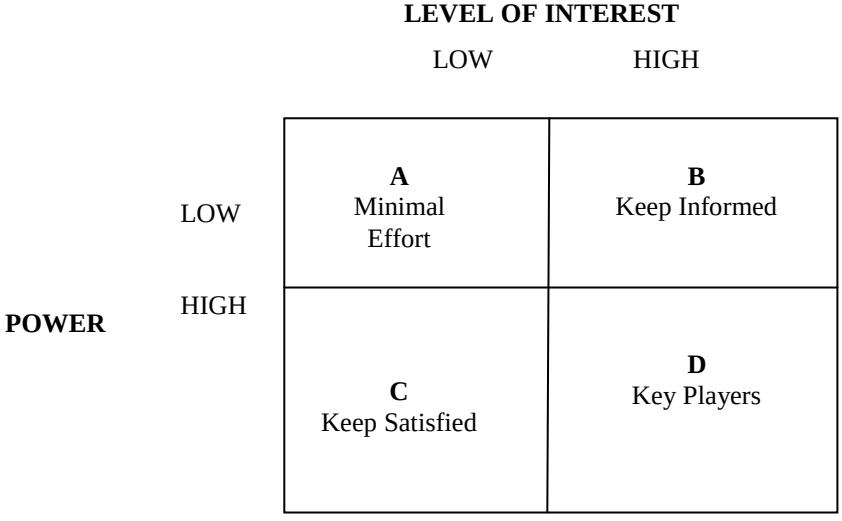
recognition of stakeholders and make allowance for them to make informed and conscious decisions about the development of tourism at a specific destination.

In practice, however, the application of Stakeholder Theory in the tourism context does not conform to the theory particularly well. Byrd and Gutske (2007, p. 177) argue that tourism planners often make subjective judgements about 'who and what groups are included to represent stakeholders'. Byrd (2007b) argues that two areas of thinking have emerged. The first approach has synergies with the normative moral approach developed by Donaldson and Preston (1995). The notion is that consideration should be given to all tourism stakeholder groups without one being assigned priority over the other. Whilst time consuming and expensive, this approach can reduce the potential for conflicts, and is regarded as more politically legitimate (Yuksel, Bramwell and Yuksel, 1999). It has been argued that if tourism stakeholders that are instrumental in the ongoing survival of a plan or corporation are not identified, then the entire process may collapse (Clarkson, 1995).

The second approach has synergies with the classical idea of stakeholder management, whereby a central agency considers the interests of stakeholders and develops policy based upon their power. Clarkson (1995) applied the classical approach by using a tiered approach which 'prioritises' stakeholders according to their power bases. In this approach, primary stakeholders are described as those whose continued participation is essential for the corporation to survive. In comparison, secondary stakeholders are described as those who can affect and influence, but who are not considered to be essential to the corporation's ongoing survival. Grimble and Wellard (1997) also took the classical approach of prioritisation and classified "more or less" important stakeholders, according to their influence.

One of the risks of estimating power (within either approach) is that it may change over time and/or be underestimated, particularly if stakeholder groups are 'under-researched' or have only recently emerged. Markwick (2000) argued that stakeholder mapping provides a useful tool in managing risk - it is used to understand those who are the 'blockers' and 'facilitators' of tourism developments. Her model mapped the level of interest of each stakeholder group and also their ability or power to exert their influence. It also recognised key players and argued that they should be considered during the formulation and evaluation of proposals. Additionally, Markwick (2000) also argued that tourism stakeholders may appear to have little interest and high power, and that 'difficult situations can arise if their level of interest is underrated and they suddenly reposition' (p. 521). The model also argued that tourism stakeholders with high interest levels but low power also need to be kept fully informed of major decisions in order to maintain their goodwill in case of the event in which they become crucially important allies or opponents of other stakeholders (Markwick, 2000).

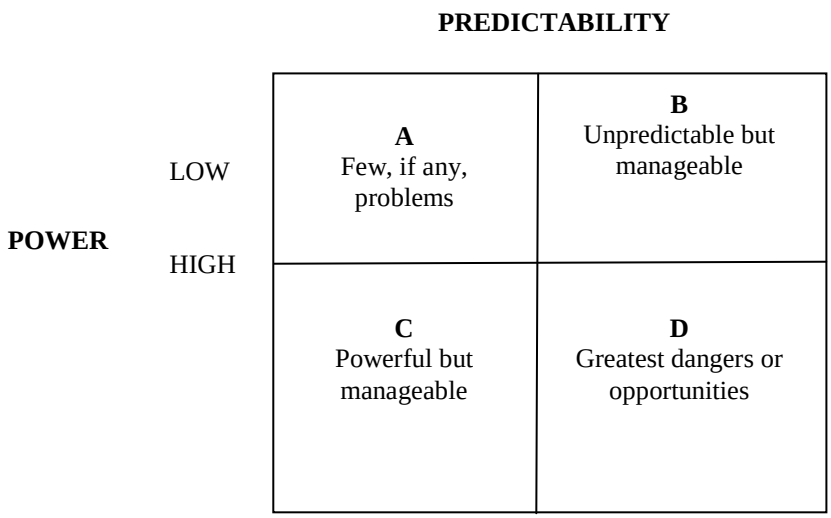
Figure 1. Stakeholder Mapping



Adapted from Markwick, 2000

Newcombe (2003) built upon this by proposing that the strength of stakeholder mapping is its ability to make judgements on three issues: likelihood, means, and impacts of the stakeholder groups upon projects. In doing so, he proposed the power/predictability matrix, which could be used to plot stakeholders' power and their predictability of power. The matrix was proposed to be a tool that enabled 'managers to assess the size of the stakeholder problems they have' (Newcombe, 2003, p. 844).

Figure 2. The Power/Predictability Matrix for Stakeholder Mapping



The power/predictability model is designed to help managers assess which stakeholder groups could cause issues. In Quadrant A, stakeholders are highly predictable with low power bases, and are argued to present few, if any, management problems. Quadrant B includes stakeholders who are unpredictable but possess limited power, and are considered 'easily manageable'. Quadrant C stakeholders are considered to be powerful but predictable, whilst those in Quadrant D pose the 'greatest danger', as they are considered to be 'unpredictable and powerful.' They are considered by Newcombe (2003) to be the stakeholders who can halt projects, although unlike stakeholders in Quadrant C, they are considered to be more open to persuasion and can be marshalled to support innovative solutions.

The issue with this model is that it assumes one can gain all information about a stakeholder group in terms of their power and predictability (e.g. before a tourism development project begins). While the models recognise that stakeholders in Quadrants A and B (who have less power) can influence stronger stakeholders, it does not account for 'neglected stakeholder' groups whose members (and power bases) are assumed too disparate to be influential. The models are inherently static, failing to acknowledge that stakeholder groups can suddenly become influential. Situations such as these may include the attainment of power by a stakeholder group after the process of stakeholder mapping has been completed, or when emerging stakeholder groups are underestimated, or even not assessed for both their power and predictability. This issue was recognised by Healey (1997, p. 271) who argued that 'stakeholder analysis needs to be conducted in an explicit, dynamic and revisable way as stakeholders may change over time in their concerns.' Mitchel, Agle and Wood (1997) argue that the relative importance of differing stakeholder groups over others rests upon three relationship attributes: power, legitimacy, and urgency. Building upon this notion, Wickham and Wong (2009, p. 295) summarise these as follows:

1. *Power itself does not necessitate high salience in a stakeholder- manager relationship; power gains its authority through legitimacy and its exercise through urgency.*
2. *Legitimacy needs the other two attributes, power and urgency to gain its power and voice.*
3. *Urgency, when combined with at least one of the other attributes, will increase the salience in a stakeholder- manager relationship.*

Wickham and Wong (2009) argue that there are three levels of stakeholder management: the rational level, the process level, and the transaction level. At the rational level of analysis, managers need to go beyond mapping of their stakeholders and ensure they understand the ideologies and the personalities at the core of the group. At the process level, Wickham and Wong (2009) argue that managers may choose to move away from inclusive management techniques and consider disengaging or ignoring dysfunctional stakeholder groups. At the transaction level, they take this one step further and argue that managers may have exchanges with stakeholders that favour the organisation. However, the underlying risk of this approach is that if stakeholders are inaccurately mapped, or their powers are underestimated or change over time, the entire stakeholder management process will be significantly undermined.

Within the tourism literature, stakeholder management and mapping has also been addressed. Tourism stakeholders have been determined to include individuals within the community, government departments, the private sector, the public sector (Hall and Page, 1999) and in later work, visitors (Hardy, 2005). Stakeholder Theory has been applied by a number of researchers within the tourism literature (Byrd and Gustke, 2007; Grimble and Wellard, 1997; Jamal and Getz, 1999), commonly used to focus upon individual stakeholder groups: either tourists, business owners or regulators (Byrd

and Gustke, 2007; Hardy and Beeton, 2001). The need for research that concurrently assesses multiple stakeholder groups has been stressed by many authors within the literature who argue that concurrent assessment is a mechanism for examining and monitoring differing views and encouraging sustainable tourism outcomes (Byrd, 2007a; Byrd and Gustke, 2007; Hardy and Beeton, 2001; Sautter and Leisen, 1999; Yuksel et al., 1999). As is the case within the broader stakeholder literature, two differing approaches now exist within the tourism stakeholder literature. Most common is the normative approach to stakeholder management. This approach aligns itself with the notion of collaborative decision making and has synergies with the notion of sustainable tourism (Hardy and Beeton, 2001). It implies that all stakeholder groups should be given priority without one being given preference over the others (Hardy and Beeton, 2001; Sautter and Liesen, 1999; Yuksel et. al., 1999). Consequently, a crucial first step is to identify all stakeholder groups, from which assessments can be undertaken to determine their levels of power, influence and interest, as well as relationships with other stakeholders. From a sustainability perspective, the normative approach is likely to produce more sustainable outcomes as it is more likely that existing broad stakeholder groups will be involved. Indeed, it has been argued that it is only through the application of this approach that sustainable planning and management may be achieved (Hardy and Beeton, 2001). But from an industry perspective, the normative approach is costly, time consuming and difficult to implement. The reality of the tourism industry is that plans and proposals are often made and stakeholder management is typically implemented after the fact. Conversely, the classical view, whereby power is considered and certain stakeholder groups may be favoured over others, represents the practical reality of the application of stakeholder management in tourism. It risks overlooking/underestimating neglected stakeholder groups and in doing so, may compromise the achievement of sustainable tourism outcomes. Once judgements are made regarding the various legitimate stakeholder groups, or stakeholder groups that require interaction and response, existing approaches to stakeholder management are then limited in their ability to incorporate and respond to neglected stakeholder groups.

This paper presents two cases where a once 'neglected' and geographically disparate stakeholder group were excluded from the decision making process in two tourism destinations in Canada and Australia. Both destinations were forced to respond to a rapid rise in a new form of tourism practice (i.e. 'free camping') by a segment of tourists: Recreational Vehicle (RV) users. These case studies show how a neglected stakeholder group can rapidly consolidate their collective power, legitimacy and create urgency. The outcomes illustrated in these cases generally support the arguments previously made by Hardy (2005) that the understanding of multiple-stakeholder perceptions should be a key component of sustainable tourism planning. The focus was however specifically on dynamic changes in the stakeholder landscape. Therefore, the ability of stakeholder analysis to uncover neglected and disparate stakeholder groups formed the core inquiry of this research.

Understanding the Recreational Vehicle User Stakeholder Group

Travel in a Recreational Vehicle (RV) is a 'form of tourism where travellers take a camper trailer, van conversion, fifth wheel, slide-on camper, caravan or motor home on holiday with them, and use the vehicle as their primary form of accommodation' (Hardy and Gretzel, 2011, p. 194). The recreational vehicle sector has been widely reported as growing rapidly (Counts and Counts, 2004; Onyx and Leonard, 2005; Tourism Australia 2012). It is a sector which thrives upon the notion of freedom and the open road, an image which has been popularised in many Western countries. The increase in RVers has a variety of consequences for communities and businesses that have had to accommodate these travellers. The large size of RVs and their internal designs necessitate specific infrastructure - such as information on parking, the creation of large parking bays and campsites which have easy access and minimise the need for turning or reversing. Many vehicles are equipped with bathroom, kitchen and electrical appliances and campsites now cater to these needs providing electrical hook ups, Wi-Fi access or grey and black water sewage facilities. However, mid-sized to large RVs are also capable of staying at 'dry sites' which have no facilities at all because they contain grey and black water storage and are equipped with battery storage, solar panels or diesel generators.

The ability of RVs to stay at 'dry sites' means that the practice of free/low-cost camping is now widespread throughout Australia and North America with countless websites, discussion boards, blogs and books having been created that are dedicated to this activity (Counts and Counts, 2004; Hardy, Hanson and Gretzel 2012). For councils affected by this phenomenon, a management dilemma exists. 'Free camping' sites attract RVers to areas that they would not otherwise stay within the region. The issue of free camping is a great challenge facing the tourism industry; the infrastructure requirements not only affect campground owners (who lose business), but also local councils (who are increasingly involved in the provision and/or management of free or minimal cost campsites). It has also created clear divisions in communities affected by RVing and as such, is an area of research that speaks strongly of the relevance of stakeholder research (Prideaux and Carson, 2003). The RVing market in Australia and North America has recently been compared in terms of their online

behaviour and use of technology. Recent research documented that social interaction and the use of technology- for both trip planning and online fellowship - forms a highly significant part of the RV experience (Hardy and Gretzel, 2011; Hardy, Hanson and Gretzel, 2012).

Method

Our research was opportunistic, in that we observed an issue arising through the local media in Canada and Australia. The similarities in the debate lead us to explore why it was such a contentious and unresolved issue in different continents and their respective tourism industries. As such, this research adopted a multiple-case study approach in order to focus on the neglected stakeholder phenomenon in the RVing context. The multiple-case study approach allowed us to understand the complexity of the situations in Canada and Australia, and to extract commonalities and differences between the two contexts (Babbie 2004; Patton 2002). A multiple-case study approach holds credence for the research because in both countries, the practice of free camping is a commonly debated issue. Recent research has revealed that RVers in North America and Australia are similar in terms of their online 'neo-tribal' behaviour and performative aspects such as club gatherings, member-based activities and RV-based fellowship (Hardy, Hanson and Gretzel, 2012).

In terms of data collection, we gathered information from multiple sources including in-depth interviews and news media articles (including 'letters to the editor'). In terms of primary interview data collection, and in order to understand RVers' perceptions and motivations in British Columbia, Canada, 25 in-depth interviews were conducted during August and September of 2005 with RVers staying at the Wal-Mart car park. The in-depth interviews were purposive and ceased when saturation of opinions was reached, meaning that no new information was emergent (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). Similarly, in the summer of 2011-2012, we conducted in-depth interviews of 51 RVers staying in free and low cost campsites in Tasmania. Of the 51 RVers interviewed, 21 were staying in a low cost local council managed area, adjacent to a sports playing field. The remainder were staying in National Park managed sites on the East Coast of Tasmania. One of these sites, Mayfields, was completely free (6 RVers) and the other was the well-known Freycinet National Park (19 RVers). Our in-depth interviews were also similar in that they were purposive, and ceased when saturation occurred.

Each of the primary interview transcripts and secondary data sources were subject to a rigorous content analysis process that followed the five-stage protocol forwarded by Finn, White and Walton (2000). The content analysis and the verification of the conclusions drawn were facilitated by the use of the NVIVO (version 8) software package. During Stage One, the aims and objectives of the research were identified, and the first round coding rules were developed. Coding refers to the process of converting information into contextual values for the purposes of data storage, management and analysis allowing theme identification (Ticehurst and Veal, 2000). In the second stage of the content analysis, all of the interview transcripts and secondary data were converted into MS Word® format, and entered into a codified NVIVO database. At regular intervals, inter-coder reliability checks were taken to ensure that the data were coded consistently with the rules set in Stage One. In the third stage of the content analysis, the coded data were further interrogated to detect any significant themes that emerged in the data. The trends and emerging themes detected in the analysis formed the basis for establishing the second round of data categories. As was the case in Stage One, the second round of coding rules were developed prior to the coding of the data itself (to maintain a consistent approach between researchers), and to provide a protocol for others to follow should they wish to replicate the analysis. In the final stage of the content analysis, the results of the second round coding were refined and the research findings finalised. In order to facilitate the theory building process, memos were maintained about the data, their categories, and the relationships between them as they emerged (Wilson, 1985). NVIVO has a facility for the creation and retention of such memos for later consideration and analysis. Utilising the memo capability within the NVIVO package, memo reports were generated by the software after 'Stage Two' coding. From these reports, the trends and emerging themes became clearer. The themes emanating from the 'second round' of coding form the basis of the results section that follows.

Results

Case Study #1: Prince George, British Columbia, Canada

Prince George is located at 53 degrees north in British Columbia, Canada. Situated where the Fraser River and Nechakao River converge, the township has a long history of settlement, beginning with the Lhledi Tenneh people. Following European settlement, Prince George has been the site of fur-trading settlements by the Hudson Bay Company and more recently, pulp mills. Therefore its role in tourism, given its location on the junction of two major highways running north-south and east-west, is as a stopover destination. It is known as a destination where RVers re-fuel and rest while travelling either north to Alaska, west to Prince Rupert, or East to Jasper.

During the time of this investigation, RVers had several options for overnight camping. They could

stay at four commercial grounds, or in the local WalMart car park. Over the past ten years, WalMart has become increasingly popular for RVers, along with other 'box-stores' through North America. According to an article by Moskowitz (2004), WalMart is popular with RVers because of its perceived safety and convenience. The practice of using WalMarts as an overnight stop is now extremely common, with a plethora of websites and online discussion groups devoted entirely to the practice. Although the WalMart website neither discusses nor promotes the practice, the unofficial WalMart RVing websites that exist, state that provided the council or retail managers have not banned overnighting it is tolerated, as long as RVers are discrete. Some websites devoted to the practice state there are unofficial rules of engagement: asking the manger first, staying only one night, parking as far as possible from the store, being unobtrusive and not pulling out items such as tables and chairs (Fletcher and Crawford, 1999). While definitive research does not exist on usage on WalMart parking lots, the activity of free camping (or 'boondocking' as it is known in North America) is significant. A study by Tourism British Columbia (2005) found that a third of travellers spent at least one night in a roadside pull-out or parking lot during their trip, and 7 per cent of all travellers indicated that they used roadside pull-outs or parking lots as their primary form of accommodation.

Since the 1980s, a Prince George City Council bylaw had existed which banned overnight camping in parking lots; however this bylaw had never been enforced. In 2003 a consortium of local Commercial RV park owners complained they were losing business to WalMart and other box-stores. In response to these complaints and without consultation from stakeholders such as RVers, community members or tourism decision makers, the council approved a new proposed bylaw in April 2005. The proposed bylaw recommended that retailers and landowners who allowed RVs to stay overnight on their asphalt should be given a monetary fine. The proposal was an attempt to placate the Commercial RV Park stakeholders. Within weeks, the city's daily newspaper *The Prince George Citizen* received hundreds of letters. In these letters, Commercial RV Park and campground operators expressed their concern about a potential economic loss to their businesses from the free camping in WalMart parking lots, as well as other commercial parking lots. However, others felt that RV parking should be encouraged in order to attract more RVers to the city. RV Clubs quickly picked up the issue. The Escapees Club for example, encouraged its community containing 70,000 members to write to the newspaper and complain. The response prompted the city council to rescind its motion two weeks later, and city council staff were asked to come up with an alternate bylaw. This bylaw permitted RVers to stay for up to 36 hours instead of 24-hours (the limit in the original bylaw), and was created despite pleas by Commercial RV Park owners to limit stays to 8-10 hours.

RVers' Perceptions

The in-depth interviews revealed several types of free campers which have not previously been classified through research. The first group we were able to identify were what we defined as 'Career Free Campers'. This group of travellers prided themselves in their free camping behaviour, which is supported by websites, blogs and RV travel publications. Their decision to free camp at all times was partially based upon a desire to save money, along with a desire escape the conventions and routines of everyday life:

> *We have everything we need; we don't need to plug in.*
>
> *We only ever stay in WalMart. Just follow the map.*

Those who "free camped" most of the time were termed 'High-Use Free Campers' and represented the majority of RVers who we interviewed. These travellers were motivated by similar reasons but often preferred free camping in provincial parks to WalMart or Commercial RV Parks.

> *Some provincial parks where we camp in are beautiful with the plants and wildlife. We have stopped where you can eat the wild mushrooms.*

In addition, free camping was seen by both High Use Free Campers and Career Free Campers as offering freedom from having to book, work to schedules and make reservations. In particular WalMart was seen by both groups of RV travellers as a safe place to stay. This finding supports research by Hardy and Gretzel (2011) who found safety to be of significant importance to many RVers. Both free camping groups were also extremely well connected both through social media and word of mouth communication. Indeed the majority of these free campers had become aware of the free camping ban in Prince George via these mediums. Finally, both groups were eager to tell our interviewers what while they may not pay for accommodation; they spent money in townships on petrol, facilities, food and at tourism venues. The third group that our interviews revealed were what we defined as 'Convenience Free Campers'. These RVers were reluctant free campers who would only free camp if in a town for a short time. If not free camping, these people showed a higher propensity to stay in Commercial RV parks, in order to make use of their facilities:

> *I don't like it but we had to stay here because we got in late tonight. There are no amenities, no*

street lights, it's noisy from passing traffic. We are just staying here for convenience and usually only stop in WalMart's for one night.

The significance of this finding is that the research revealed a spectrum of free campers exists, contrary to the belief that free campers were a homogeneous user group.

Implications for Stakeholder Analysis

The analysis revealed that commercial parking lots such as Wal-Mart is an important part of the RVers' 'gaze'- they know where they exist and will overnight there in order to replenish supplies. The interviews revealed that the RVers were highly dependent on word of mouth information and information gained via the Internet, particularly forums and blogs. The rapid reaction of RVers to the ban illustrates how quickly a disparate, but virtually connected stakeholder group, who were considered to have little power could unite via the Internet and act in a united fashion to protest against decisions. Moreover the research revealed that the behaviour and motivations of RVers in Prince George were neglected by the relevant Council decision-makers. They were considered to be a disparate, powerless, passive and homogeneous group who would react to a ban by simply relocating to commercial RV parks. Their rapid reaction and refusal by Career and High Use Free Campers to patronise commercial RV parks revealed they were neither powerless nor passive. Moreover, the data revealed that while the RVers were similar in that they were all free campers, their free camping habits were not homogeneous. Therefore a ban would not necessarily affect patronage at Commercial RV Parks because: i) Career Free Campers will not pay or accommodation as free camping is a core part of their travel behaviour and identity, and, ii) if forced to pay, High Use Free Campers would rather stay in fee paying Provincial parks than a Commercial RV Parks. These findings illustrate the need for stakeholder analysis to be a reiterative process, involving firstly the identification and analysis of all stakeholder groups interests and their potential power (and sub-groups which exist within it), the identification of which are to be revisited once proposals are formed and made public. This reiterative approach would allow for previously neglected groups, who may form or consolidate via the Internet, to be included in the decision making process.

Case Study #2: The Case of Tasmania, Australia

Tasmania is an island state of Australia, located at 42 degrees south. The island covers 68,119 square kilometres and is known for its cool temperate climate, large tracts of wilderness, endemic wildlife, indigenous history, European heritage and local food and wine. This location was chosen as the second case study area because it was the site of a signfinacnt debate surrounding RVing. In Tasmania, RVers are faced with a variety of overnight camping options, and the state is well known within the RVing community as a destination that provides many free camping options, including sites upon Forestry Tasmania and Hydro Tasmania land and also in Tasmanian State Forests. In recent years, many of the 28 Local Councils throughout Tasmania have responded to lobbying by the RV industry and declared their towns 'RV Friendly Towns'. This means that they provide sani-dumps, toilets, free or minimal cost camping areas for RVers, often on their recreational sports fields or showgrounds. In addition, RVers in Tasmania may also chose to stay in 107 fee-charging Commercial RV Parks or fee paying sites in Tasmania's National Parks.

In early 2011, the Tasmanian Economic Regulator investigated four complaints by Commercial RV Park operators about local councils providing free or low-priced overnight RV camping services. The Tasmanian Economic Regulator found the four offending Councils who were providing such services to be in breach of their national competition policy and competitive neutrality obligations. As a result, the Local Government Association of Tasmania, and a number of state government bodies collaborated to develop a Draft Directions Paper titled *Review of Council Recreational Vehicle Overnight Camping Services* (Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2011) which addressed the Council's competitive neutrality obligations. Input into the development of the paper was sought from stakeholders. These were defined as local government, the Caravan Industry Association of Tasmania, the Caravan and Motorhome Club of Australia, and the Tourism Industry Council. The resulting *Directions Paper* proposed to introduce a 'cost recovery' fee structures to council sites throughout the State. Almost immediately, the local newspaper, *The Mercury,* received letters debating the issue, particularly between December 1st and 15th. The letters that appeared were collected and analysed by the researchers. Many of them argued that the economic contributions which free camping RVers made to the state offset their free camping:

While travelling in Tasmania, we spend about a third of the stay in caravan parks, with the rest being spent in that wonderful network of great campsites across Tasmania……If the recommendations in the report are adopted, we would not be returning. We have all of Australia to travel in, or we could just take the $6000 trip cost and go overseas (Mercury, December 12, 2011).

Free camping is essential so that money can be spent in other areas with small towns benefitting…The motor-homers are great givers to charities such as Ronald McDonald House and the Cancer Council. They also support the Fire Service, Ambulance, Lions clubs and schools (Mercury, Dec 12, 2011).

On the other hand, some RVers supported the proposal:

I pay anything between $30 (inland) and $50 (Coastal) per night and accept that caravan parks must be supported even though I have my own amenities...If one cannot afford a reasonable night's accommodation rate then perhaps one should not be travelling (The Mercury, Dec 10, 2011).

The proposal for cost recovery was supported by some Caravan Park owners who saw the provision of free camping by councils as being unfair and anti-competitive:

Now we don't fear competition, but councils are not competing. They are giving away our product for free or near to free. That is predatory pricing (The Mercury, Dec 7, 2011).

Other operators were opponents of the plan:

Four of the 107 caravan park operators in the state are seeking a ban…Instead of whingeing to mummy, the grumbling four should be like all other businesses that provide a service and pay rates- ask themselves what's wrong with their caravan parks, why some don't want to patronise them and how they can attract customers to their door (The Mercury, Dec 8, 2011).

Residents were also divided, as was the media. The Mercury Editorial contained the following statement:

[If] Tasmania becomes the first state to get councils to impose new charges, there is a real danger that RV users might abandon their plans to visit…Caravan parks would suffer too if Tasmania suffered a boycott or dramatic downturn in RV tourism (The Mercury, Dec 7, 2011).

Conversely a resident in the *Letters to the Editor* stated:

Give me break! Just because you pay for a ticket on the ferry doesn't entitle you to a tax-payer funded holiday in the state! You're being asked to pay for the toilet, water and power facilities that you use. Everyone has to - grey nomad or not! (The Mercury, Dec 8, 2011)

RVers' Perceptions

The interviews revealed behavioural groups which were similar to those in Canada. RVers were predominantly High Use Campers whose preference was for free camping:

Mostly they are free, occasionally there's a small charge. But we tend to try and stay in those rather than go into a caravan park.

Amongst the RVers, there was also a small number of Convenience Free Campers:

…this is the first national park one we've stayed in, all the others have been caravan park type places.

Career Free Campers were also found within our participants. Indeed Tasmania was described as being well recognised for its number of free camping locations:

The cost is great, we like to free camp the whole time.

We were told that there were a lot of free camps in Tasmania – that's what clinched it for us to bring the caravan.

The access issue to Tasmania seemed to exacerbate the desire to free camp for many RVers. In order to travel through Tasmania with a rig, RVers must pay for passage from mainland Australia on a Ferry called the Spirit of Tasmania, the cost of which can be up to $1800. Numerous RVers stated that free camping helped to 'offset' these costs.

But I'd say that 90% of the grey nomads go to the freebies to recoup the money spent getting over here.

The difference between that motorhome and us is that it will cost them $500 return, whereas it costs us almost $1700 return… So we need to have the cheap accommodation.

Given the recognition of Tasmania as a free campaign destination, it was understandable that there was a strong reaction from RVers against the proposed free costs recovery structure. Unlike *The Mercury* newspaper that included letters of support for the fee cost recovery scheme, the RVers in our interviews were not supportive, although some did express an understanding of why free camping would not be supported by commercial campground operators.

I can imagine the Bicheno community council meeting. And the three people who own caravan parks would be saying no, we don't want any free camps as their lively hood depends on people pulling up.

Many RVers felt a fee cost recovery scheme would have a long term negative impact on the state:

There's a bill being proposed that councils and so on can't provide free RV accommodation unless they charge a full commercial rate on it - which means that people aren't going to be coming.

Moreover, RVers suggested that reactions to a ban would result in negative impacts on townships, as RVers would not visit them, such as was the case in Prince George:

If you are an RV friendly town, you tend to support that town. If they don't support you, you'll get the minimal of things. You'll go to the next town and you'll get your groceries and diesel, because you want to encourage it.

I know there's caravan parks in town, but it discourages people like us driving back as you've got a lot of wildlife, a lot more than we have (in QLD). It depends what you're looking for.

Implications for Stakeholder Analysis

Once again, during the course of this issue being played out in the media, it came to our attention that the power, interest and make up of Australian RVers over this issue had been significantly underestimated. Reactions amongst RVers revealed the RV market, similar to that in North America, was heterogeneous and a split existed between those were prepared to stay in Commercial RV parks and those who were strongly opposed to a ban (although in the Tasmanian case supporters of the proposal were evident in the newspaper only, not in interviews which were conducted). As with the Prince George experience, the Tasmanian case study illustrated that the RV stakeholder group were considered to be a disparate, powerless, passive and homogeneous group who would react to a ban on free camping by willingly paying the new fees in local councils, or relocating to commercial RV parks. Their rapid response, which was facilitated by social media, illustrated the rapid consolidation of power by the RV stakeholder group in a response to the issue. This power and reaction was completely underestimated by the regulatory authorities, who like those in Prince George, were forced to respond back down within days of the release of the *Discussion Paper* by clarifying that no fees would exceed $10, thus placating the opposition to some degree.

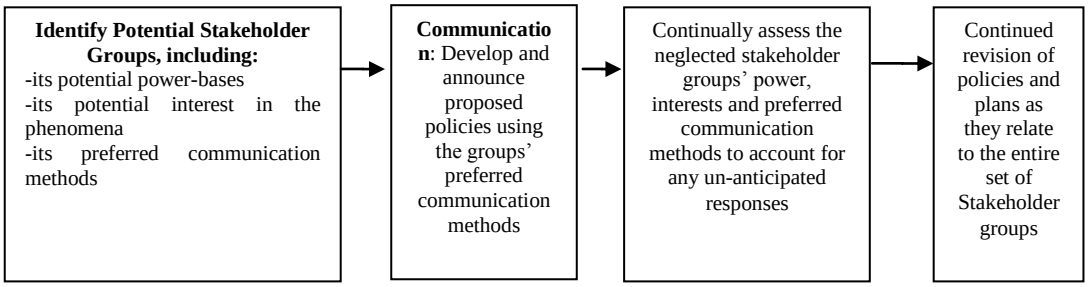
Discussion

The similarities between both these cases suggest that many common issues exist in the RV stakeholder group context across the two countries. In both cases, the responses by local government were developed upon the assumption that the neglected RV stakeholders (for free camping) were homogeneous and would simply move to commercial RV Parks, or willingly pay if free camping was closed down as an option. However, this research has confirmed that the RV stakeholder groups are, in fact, heterogeneous - and that bans of free camping will not automatically encourage RVers to use paid alternatives in townships. Rather, it will likely provoke RVers to protest, and in the case of Prince George, boycott the township in its entirety. Both cases illustrated the risks inherent in traditional, static stakeholder analysis and the need for an approach that is viable in a post-social media context. Had iterative stakeholder analysis been conducted, the need to include RVers as stakeholders in the process would have been recognised. Moreover, the analysis would have recognised their potential for power via their highly social lifestyle, which is facilitated through word of mouth communication and heavy use of social media, blogging and online forums. Many full time RVers have nomadic travel habits that make them difficult to contact; and, tourism businesses and managers often have little interest in the industry because RVers are often perceived as travellers with low incomes who do not contribute towards hotel taxes (Hardy and Gretzel, 2011). In addition, the lack of interest in this group of travellers may result from the stigma associated with transient lifestyles and the assumption that RVers are cheap, poor, and comparable to 'trailer-trash' (Counts and Counts, 2004). The Prince George and Tasmanian cases demonstrate that the Commercial RV Park owners were seen as key players who had to be kept satisfied and that RVers' power was clearly underestimated. Arguably, the failure in the popularity of the proposals and the ensuing reaction by RVers, has resulted in a tarnished reputation for both destinations in terms of their RV Friendliness, which was found to be a highly significant factor for RVers, when making decisions on where to visit (Hardy and Gretzel, 2011).

The Tasmanian and British Columbian examples also highlight the rapid changes that have occurred in the Web 2.0 era. Social media increasingly facilitate communication and change the way in which stakeholders interact with each other, as well as the speed with which they can communicate. This creates tensions within stakeholder management because traditional stakeholder mapping can be done once an issue arises, but the 'viral' nature of how the proposal was spread through the online communication

channels of the RVers, suggests that stakeholder analysis needs to be an iterative process. Thus we propose a Dynamic Model for Neglected Stakeholder Analysis and Engagement. The first stage is pro-active, where potential stakeholders' interest, power and predictability is set at centre-stage, and can be assessed, using the approach of Markwick (2000) and Newcombe (2003). The second stage occurs after the proposal's release and once the broader stakeholder groups have had time to assess management policy changes. This second iteration allows for reactions to unexpected changes, such as the rapid emergence of a previously neglected group which could be facilitated through the Internet and specifically through social media (Figure 3).

Figure 3. A Dynamic Model for Neglected Stakeholder Analysis and Engagement



Inherent in this model is the recognition that unpredictability in stakeholder responses is now more commonplace, and that neglected groups can rapidly form and generate significant power and influence using social-media and the Internet generally. This situation potentially undermines the strength of Newcombe's (2003) model where stakeholder's predictability and power are mapped, because the Internet could arguably allow any group to rapidly consolidate their otherwise disparate power. The revised model also differs from that of Newcombe's (2003) because it emphasises the power of preferred communication channels, especially when they are based on Web 2.0 technologies. Once the communication methods that are used by stakeholders groups are recognised, plans and policies can be released via these channels, which will help ensure that developments in communication channels, such as new social media sites, can be accommodated for. The third element of the model notes the importance for an ongoing analysis of any newly-recognised stakeholder group to take place; by their very definition, a newly identified stakeholder group will possess many characteristics unknown or obscured to the manager/government agent. The process of continued assessment of the 'neglected' stakeholder groups' power, interest and preferred communication methods is an important element, as it forces stakeholder managers to monitor changes until such as point that they are as stable and 'predictable' as those of any other salient stakeholder group.

This research also highlights the potential pitfalls for the application of the classical approach to stakeholder management where only the powerful or prominent stakeholders are engaged. Markwick (2000, p. 521) recognises limitations with his model, arguing that 'difficult situations can arise if their level of interest is underrated and they suddenly reposition.' This situation is increasingly likely in the Web 2.0 era, and illustrates a fundamental shift in how stakeholder power can develop. Thus, the risk for a classical approach is that there will be a limited ability to produce sustainable solutions; in the case of Prince George, the failure to involve RVers in the process, coupled with the assumption the emerging RVing market was homogeneous, and their rapid display of solidarity and power resulted in the failure of the government's policy. A second limitation with the classical approach is that that if mistakes are made as to who is the most powerful stakeholder group, decisions could be made which are not accepted by other stakeholder groups; in Tasmania, the CMCA which is Australia's largest and arguably most politically prominent RV club was consulted when developing the cost recovery fee structures. However, the CMCA is a club allowing full membership only for motorhomes, they do not represent caravan users, fifth-wheel users or in general non-club members. Research has shown that not all RV stakeholders desire to belong to clubs (Hardy and Gretzel, 2011). Consequently in Tasmania, many RV stakeholders protested against the proposal, and the decision to limit engagement to only one national RVing body (and sideline other RVers) resulted in a proposal which was not considered sustainable for many of the established stakeholders groups.

The reality of business and government is that managers must make decisions on whom to consult with, given their time and budget constraints. A normative approach to stakeholder mapping and analysis is time consuming and potentially cost prohibitive, thus we propose that a new view of stakeholder analysis is needed which merges both the normative and the classical view of stakeholder management. In this new form, decisions must be made as to "who is powerful", as per the Markwick (2000) model, but there needs to be an additional iterative cycle within the process. This means that if

inaccuracies occur at the identification stage or the stakeholder landscape suddenly changes, there is room to react to neglected stakeholders whose potential for power, predictability and/or interest in the issue has been ignored, or at best, underestimated. This iterative cycle allows for more sustainable management outcomes in an age of social media communications, and explicitly recognises the collective power now available to otherwise disparate stakeholder groups. Consequently, our Dynamic Model acknowledges rapid change as a constant, which is facilitated through the use of the Internet and social media. At its core is a recognition that stakeholder analysis can no longer operate as a static, one-dimensional exercise. Rather, stakeholder analysis must take into account instantaneous communication, facilitated through the Internet and social media, which can allow for neglected groups to emerge, rapidly consolidate and become powerful. It addresses what Luoma-aho and Vos (2010) call emerging 'issue arenas', which have to be continuously monitored. The elements of the proposed dynamic stakeholder analysis process provide a nexus between classical and normative approaches to stakeholder management and allow for neglected groups to be included in the decision making process. Without such an approach, accurate and informed and sustainable decision making remains unlikely.

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