

Aligning Tourism Area Life Cycle and Product Life Cycle in Avoiding Decline Stage (Case Study: West Nusa Tenggara Indonesia)

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Abstract--- The peak of tourism industry in West Nusa Tenggara before Covid-19 pandemic suggested that its position was already in stagnation stage according to TALC (Tourism Area Life Cycle). In addition, the stage can also be aligned with PLC (Product Life Cycle) which is known as maturity stage. This research extracted opinions from tourism industry stakeholders by using multiple FGD (Focus Group Discussion) and summarized the result into a recommendation in order to avoid the declining stage of tourism industry, especially in West Nusa Tenggara. One of the main conclusive answers is optimizing e-tourism as innovative pace. However, this step does not only need good commitment, support, and collaborative intention from whole stakeholders but also good preparation from local human resources to support its sustainability. This preparation should be fulfilled by local vocational higher education in West Nusa Tenggara which is known as Tourism Polytechnic Lombok.

Keywords--- *Tourism Area Life Cycle, Product Life Cycle, Decline Stage, Tourism Industry*

Introduction

Recently, tourism management is facing a considerable challenge during Covid-19 pandemic era (Gretzel et al., 2020). While many tourism destinations were severely impacted by lockdown policy, some tourism destinations were denying their declining life cycle during the pandemic. Meanwhile, tourism management is different from common company management, since it was declared as one of the biggest providers of jobs in the world (Buhalis & Law, 2008). As a result, the industry must be saved in order to prevent massive unemployment.

Tourism management in West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, has a unique combination between ancient tradition, beautiful nature, and upcoming modern destination, and it has to deal with the same problem. As a matter of fact, tourism industry which is focusing in nature and old tradition is facing a declining life cycle, and the upcoming modern destination in West Nusa Tenggara, which is known as Mandalika, will finish its giant modern project in 2022 (Dewan Nasional Kawasan Ekonomi Republik Indonesia, 2020). Thus, the industry will be presented with tough choices, and one will be cast in the shadow of another.

In early 2000, The tourism industry had already evolved its development, especially in its marketing and consumer behavior point of view, into the e-tourism era which emphasizes internet usage (Mills & Rob, 2004). It means that traditional tourism destinations had to deal with such a big challenge even before Covid-19 pandemic. Hence, tourism industry, especially those which emphasize their ancient tradition and utilize conventional tourism management, will face declining life cycle sooner or later.

It also affects tourism destinations in West Nusa Tenggara which mostly consist of conventional management model as their core. While tourism industry should follow the rule of TALC (Tourism Area Life Cycle) by Butler (R W Butler, 1980; Richard W Butler, 2019) as a common business guideline, it should also be following the same rule in the product life cycle for its sustainability (Duque Ciceri, Garetti, & Terzi, 2014). As a result, when both of them are aligned and analyzed, the results should provide good recommendation to tourism destination management on how to avoid declining life cycle. It should be applicable, especially during Covid-19 pandemic era, and it's also according to how the tourists gradually incline toward e-tourism.

TALC itself has already empirically applied by many tourism researches in order to create good view on how tourism industry should consider important aspects for its sustainable development. Some researchers argued that TALC is deeply influential in deciding which of the most important feature that should be exposed in tourism destination (Setiawan & Wiweka, 2018; Singh, 2020), and other said that TALC could help create friendly ecological tourism destination (Tang, Zhong, & Ng, 2017). In addition, TALC helps tourism management avoid scenarios such as having its own life cycle ends up in a declining state.

Additionally, product life cycle (PLC), as the main concept in every business lineage, also has a decline point that should be avoided (Galiano Martínez, Rodríguez Rodríguez, & Saco Vázquez, 2018). It is also clearly stated that the product life cycle can also be aligned with other life cycles, depending on each business lineage. For example, in software development, product life cycle can also be aligned to SDLC (Rajlich & Bennett, 2000), which is an evidence that PLC is basic for every other business life cycle, including tourism.

This research aims to analyze how TALC should be aligned with PLC, in order to avoid the decline point which may occur in both life cycle. This research utilizes case study at West Nusa Tenggara, especially in tourism industry, which focuses on old tradition or ancient heritage, and natural beauty. As previously explained, both were already facing significant challenge even before Covid-19 pandemic era. Thus, tourism management should be given advice on how to survive and not slipping toward the declining stage. This research also gives clear and simple explanations on how other similar conditions in tourism industry can adapt to the alignment and survive through the future.

Methods

This research took place in West Nusa Tenggara province as the location of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with stakeholders. The FGD itself had been done for at least three times since early 2020 with many participants from the local government, Tourism Ministry, tourism stakeholders (hotel management, ITDC (International Tourist Development Center), Indonesian Chef Association (ICA), and Hotel Association (PHRI), Tourism Industry Association, Tour Guide Association, BOP (Badan Otoritas Pariwisata)), as well as Tourism Village management.

The first FGD was held in early November 2019 which was attended by local tourism stakeholders and Tourism Village management. This meeting aimed to provide early ideas brainstorming and clear vision about a recent condition in tourism industry in West Nusa Tenggara. The second FGD was held four months later in March 2020 and attended by the same participants that were focusing on how West Nusa Tenggara tourism dealt with challenges in e-tourism era, avoided the decline point for old tourism destination, and adapted to new upcoming destination (Mandalika). The last FGD, which was held online in November 2020 with the same participants as second FGD, concluded and presented proposed alignment and suggestion to all stakeholders. This last meeting also became the conclusive session which will be discussed further in the next chapter. While there were many interests discussed in the FGD process, the researcher team focused on their main purpose which was explained previously.

The whole summary of FGD was then supported by field observation in local tourism destinations (in West Nusa Tenggara province). This observation is needed because of the unique combination in West Nusa Tenggara's tourism which consists of natural beauty such as Gili Trawangan, Puncu and similar destinations, and combined with an upcoming modern destination such as Mandalika zone. Thus, the result should be adjusted and adapted into the current condition of West Nusa Tenggara tourism destinations.

Results and Discussion

Field observation at local tourist sites further endorsed the whole summary of FGD and benchmarking (in West Nusa Tenggara province). The result of FGD can be summarized as in the following table:

Table 1. FGD Summary Result

FGD Sequence	Main Points
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Marketing of tourism industry in West Nusa Tenggara should involve e-tourism for leveraging factor. b. Vocational higher education in tourism should optimize local human resources for creating better self-belonging and self-pride in tourism industry. c. The current tourism industry in West Nusa Tenggara has already reached a mature point if it is viewed using PLC. However, in TALC, it could be seen as reaching stagnation point if there is no innovation in managing the current condition. d. Massive promotion from local government and Tourism Ministry has already reached its peak and bring lots of tourists. However, it can be trapped in the dangerous stage if there is no innovation in the current tourism industry of West Nusa Tenggara.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. E-tourism role should be increased to leverage and maintain PLC and TALC position of the tourism industry in West Nusa Tenggara. b. Tourism industry needs alumni who understand not only the hard skill of hospitality but also the managerial skill and common IT skill to support e-tourism. c. In order to develop improved curricula for the Tourism Research Program and to balance the need for the theoretical learning method and field practice for students, the Association should maintain active involvement.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Both facets have already been influenced by disappointing outcomes in the Covid-19 pandemic period. This should build better ways to plan for the resurrection in the future. b. The Covid-19 pandemic could arouse the value of introducing e-tourism and support the leverage of conventional tourism management. Thus, it can avoid stagnation and decline point. c. In order to create better standards for curricula, better cooperation should be developed between all tourism polytechnics in Indonesia. It should not leave out local wisdom and must brace for the tourism industry's next challenges. Thus, it will give better preparation for future tourism industry, especially in West Nusa Tenggara.

TALC as life cycle in the tourism field has already been stated by Butler in the late '70s. However, there are some improvements made by Butler itself (Richard W Butler, 2019) and also from other researchers who apply TALC into local wisdom and specific condition (Kruczek & Kruczek, 2018; Setiawan & Wiweka, 2018). TALC itself has at least seven components, which are: (1) exploration, (2) involvement, (3) development, (4) consolidation, (5) stagnation, (6) rejuvenation and (7) decline (Richard W Butler, 2019). In brief, TALC can be seen in the following figure:

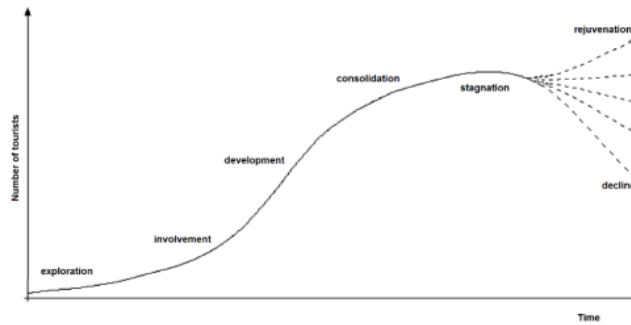


Figure 1. TALC (Kruczek et al., 2018)

In this research, we only focus on the stagnation point which is the position of West Nusa Tenggara tourism industry. The tourists' number, before Covid-19 pandemic, was massive and the infrastructure development was also generously supported by the local government. Thus, it really leveraged tourism industry to a favorable position. However, the need for survival and creating sustainability is a must for tourism industry, especially in Covid-19 pandemic era.

The FGD results from tourism industry stakeholders had reached a common agreement that one of the leveraging factors for avoiding decline point is to implement e-tourism. However, this implementation will need support from local human resources, especially youngsters, who can be recruited from local vocational higher education institutions. In this case, it will be represented by Tourism Polytechnic Lombok as the only vocational higher education in West Nusa Tenggara that specializes in tourism.

On the other hand, some stakeholders, especially from a government point of view, still believe that there is no urgent condition regarding tourism industry in West Nusa Tenggara. They said that Covid-19 pandemic would be over soon after vaccination program in the year of 2021. Thus, the implementation of e-tourism should be done slowly and very carefully. Despite that opinion, the researchers then try to present that the whole industry must be aware of the decline stage.

Decline stage does not merely exist in TALC, and the common industry is familiar with the concept of Product Life Cycle (PLC) which consist of: (1) introduction, (2) growth, (3) mature, and (4) decline stage (Day, 1981). PLC itself has been proven as one of the main weapons in marketing standard which can decide when the manufacturer should leverage their product. In fact, researchers had empirically proven that when a product has already reached its maturity stage, it will go to decline stage soon if there is no leverage step prepared (Shahmarichatghieh, Tolonen, & Haapasalo, 2015). In brief, we can see PLC in the following figure:

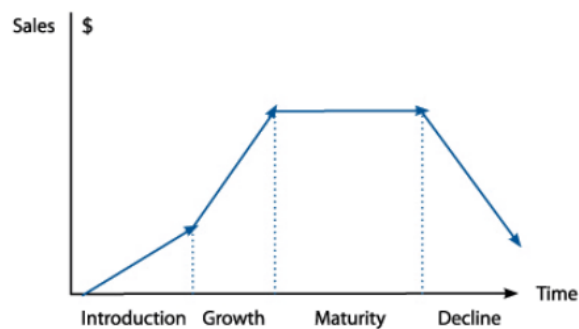


Figure 2. Product Life Cycle (Anderson & Zeithami, 1984)

This figure was then presented to government stakeholders in order to convince them that the maturity stage is just another trap for the industry. It also happened in tourism industry, and more specifically to industries which apply

TALC as the main concept in running their operations. When we try to align maturity stage and stagnation stage, then we can have this following concept figure.

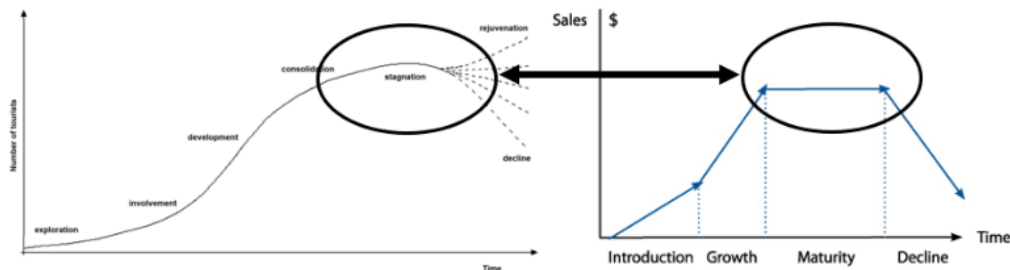


Figure 3. Alignment TALC and PLC

As an evidence, we can see that stagnation in TALC, for West Nusa Tenggara tourism industry, happened before Covid-19 pandemic. Massive tourists visit and the development of the local tourism industry such as hotel, retailer, and other supporting small industry had created routine activities for local villagers. In contrast, the upcoming big destination, Mandalika, will create more modern zones with considerable support from government and foreign investors. This will create the starting point of decline stage, whether from TALC point of view and PLC point of view. The big difference between TALC and PLC is that TALC has the opportunity to create a rejuvenation point by applying innovation.

According to this finding and the result from FGD, we can argue that the rejuvenation stage should be achieved and prepared in West Nusa Tenggara tourism industry. This may be achieved by preparing human resources from local youngsters to take vocational higher education as their main choice after high school. The province will need many prepared and skilled human resources in order to leverage and switch into the rejuvenation stage of TALC. Consequently, this could be one of the best measures to avoid the decline stage in PLC.

Covid-19 pandemic, which hit tourism industry pretty hard, should become the momentum for vocational higher education to prepare better curricula for the next generation. Hard skill in hospitality is not the only main purpose in gaining good human resource, but it also needs IT skill to support e-tourism and managerial skill to support innovation in the future. Consequently, local tourism industry will be sustainable and able to face new era during and after Covid-19 pandemic.

Conclusion

We should provide certain assumptions and responses to the research questions based on previous explanation, which are: (1) The mature stage of PLC can be aligned with stagnation stage in TALC which become a marker of importance in implementing innovation (2) TALC still provides an option to avoid decline stage by applying innovation and springs back to the rejuvenation stage, but this must be supported by good human resources in tourism industry, especially in West Nusa Tenggara (3) E-tourism is one of the main points in creating innovation and becomes an urgent matter that must be addressed soon (4) Covid-19 pandemic should become the momentum of preparation of youngsters through vocational higher education for future innovation.

In addition, the FGD also reminded us that during and a ¹⁴ Covid-19 pandemic the whole stakeholders must collaborate properly and get rid of any egocentric tendencies in order to keep the sustainability of tourism industry in West Nusa Tenggara. Support from government is also needed in order to keep small industries beyond tourism industry alive during the pandemic era.

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