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Overcoming Local Human Resources Barriers in Tourism Industry (Case Study: West Nusa Tenggara Indonesia)

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Abstract---*Tourism industry in Indonesia is hindered by barriers in its development. There are internal barriers (denial from immigrant, old tradition) and also external barriers (new skill, Covid-19 pandemic) that affect its governance. All of them stem from human resources problems that should be overcome immediately. Using funding from the Ministry of Tourism, this research aims to address said barriers and overcome human resources problems in the tourism industry, especially in Nusa Tenggara Barat. The researchers who are based in Tourism Polytechnic Lombok seek the answers from vocational higher education overview. The answers are gathered by summarizing from the Focus Group Discussion process and also benchmarking with another tourism polytechnic in Indonesia. The results are as follows: (1) NTB, as a unique combination of the tourism industry, has big potential and upcoming modern destination (Mandalika) which should become better in the future, (2) Internal barriers factor can be overcome by optimizing local human resources, (3) In problem-solving of external barrier factor, Tourism Polytechnic should also provide IT skills to support e-tourism implementation, and (4) Human resources problem in the tourism industry has a root cause in early vocational higher education which holds important factors in overcoming the problems.*

Keywords---*human resources, Lombok Tourism Polytechnic, tourism, West Nusa Tenggara*

Introduction

Indonesia as one of the biggest countries in the world has relied on tourism as one of their primary income (Indonesia.Go.id, 2019). However, Indonesia is still left behind by many other countries in developing its beautiful resources. Until 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic, Indonesia is in the 30th position among others globally (Gunawan, 2019). This fact is unfavorable since the country itself possesses abundant tourism destinations that should be optimized.

One of the problems is that tourism governance in Indonesia is considered not as good as its real beauty. Thus, many future optimizations are still needed by the Indonesian government. For example, better infrastructure (which has been done gradually (Gunawan, 2019; Indonesia.Go.id, 2019), and also better human resources for tourism administration. Furthermore, human resources in Indonesia still need many adjustments and reinforcements in its development, especially for tourism governance (Sabon et al., 2018). Thus, the problem should be overcome immediately for the sake of tourism development.

While tourism itself should not merely depend on the beauty of nature or entertainment resources, it also relies on how well human resources administering the place (Alomari et al., 2017; Ribeiro et al., 2020; Tandogan, 2017). Hence, it is stated that the most important need is developing human resources in supporting Indonesia's tourism industry. This need is not merely the responsibility of the education ministry, but also other parties such as the local government, tourism ministry as well as labor ministry.

Since 2016, the Indonesian Tourism Ministry in collaboration with Education Ministry has already established some Tourism Polytechnic to support human resources development for tourism leverage in Indonesia, especially in Nusa Tenggara Barat which has many beautiful destinations such as Labuan Bajo, Gili Trawangan, Puncak and also Satonda Island (Azzahra, 2020). It also has an upcoming big destination named Mandalika, which is intended as a special economic zone and predicted to need more than five hundred thousand employees until 2025. (National Council for Economic Zones of the Republic of Indonesia, 2020).

Nusa Tenggara Barat itself, on the other hand, has problems with its human resources which consists of its educational level, unemployment level, and its health care (Anand & Bärnighausen, 2004; Narasimhan et al., 2004). (Provincial government NTB, 2018). This unbalance condition becomes a serious problem, even though NTB is already supported by the Central Government as one of the priority tourism destinations. Meanwhile, the local government is also struggling with many local issues, such as old culture, many immigrants from Java Island, and local unemployment. Thus, the initiative programs from the Tourism Ministry and Education Ministry in forming new tourism polytechnic is expected to alleviate these problems. However, this new institution faces some problems in implementing its curricula and how to adapt to this new condition during the COVID-19 pandemic. It should also map its alumni to the right track for local tourism governance.

Based upon previous explanation, this research, funded by the Ministry of Tourism, aims to conduct a comparative study among many polytechnics and also map the feasibility study of curricula in an applied scholar of tourism study (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018; Botti et al., 2008; Wisudawati & Maheswari, 2018). The comparative study has been done through benchmarking with five other tourism polytechnics in Indonesia, and the feasibility study has been done with some expert supervision and focuses group discussion with tourism stakeholders at NTB. These steps should have overcome human resources problems in the tourism industry, especially in NTB with its unique condition. It should also be analyzed with internal and external barrier factor considerations for better tourism industry development (Doolin et al., 2002; Baud-Bovy, 1982).

Methods

This research took place in Lombok city, precisely in Tourism Polytechnic Lombok, NTB province as the location of Focus Group Discussion with stakeholders and benchmarking with a field study to five other tourism polytechnic in Indonesia (for information, all of the visits has been done before COVID-19 pandemic era). Focus Group Discussion itself has been done for at least three times since early 2020 with many participants from the local government, Tourism Ministry, Education Ministry, tourism stakeholders (hotel management, ITDC (International Tourist Development Center), Hotel Association, Indonesian Chef Association (ICA), Tourism Industry Association, Tour Guide Association, and Tourism Authority Agency, as well as Tourism Village management.

The first Focus Group Discussion was held in early November 2019 which was attended by local tourism stakeholders and Tourism Village management. This meeting aimed to provide early brainstorming for ideas and a clear vision about the feasibility of the tourism study program opening in NTB. The second Focus Group Discussion

was held four months later in March 2020 and attended by the same participants and additional participants from the Tourism Ministry and Educational Ministry. The last Focus Group Discussion, which was held online in November 2020 with the same participants as the second Focus Group Discussion, invited additional participants from other tourism polytechnics as a result of the previous benchmark. This last meeting also became the conclusive session which will be discussed in the next chapter. While there are many interests included in the Focus Group Discussion process, the researcher team focused on their main purpose which is explained previously.

On the other hand, benchmarking, which was done before Focus Group Discussion, also served as a friendly visit between other tourism polytechnics with Lombok Tourism Polytechnic. From this visit, there are some main questions in benchmarking focus which is: (1) study program profile, (2) campus facility, (3) alumni readiness, and (4) feasibility study for the tourism study program.

The whole summary of the Focus Group Discussion and benchmarking were then supported by field observation in a local tourism destination. This observation is needed because of the unique combination in NTB's tourism which comes from natural beauty such as Labuhan Bajo, Gili Trawangan, and similar destinations, and combined with an upcoming modern destination such as Mandalika zone. Thus, the result should be adjusted and adapted to the current condition of the NTB tourism destination.

Results and Discussion

The whole summary of Focus Group Discussion and benchmarking were then supported by field observation in local tourism destination (in NTB province). The result of the Focus Group Discussion can be summarized as in the following table:

Table 1
Focus group discussion summary result

Focus Group Discussion Sequence	Main Points
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The need for skillful human resources in tourism, especially in NTB is badly needed because upcoming big destinations such as Mandalika and Labuhan Bajo are about to become reality. b) Tourism Polytechnic as vocational higher education should explore local potential from around NTB. As a result, there will be more local employment in a tourism destination. c) Tourism Polytechnic should collaborate and form many partnerships with related associations to create proper curricula.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The availability of local employment should eliminate internal barrier factors which are: ancient tradition, denial of immigrants (especially from out of NTB). b) The tourism industry does not merely need skillful alumni, but it also needs the managerial capability to increase the sustainability of local tourism governance carried out by the locals. c) The tourism industry needs alumni who understand crisis management in tourism governance, and who care about the ecological impact of tourism development d) Association should have active participation to create better curricula for the Tourism Study Program and balancing the need for the theoretical learning process and field practice for students.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) In the COVID-19 pandemic era, the whole aspects were already impacted by negative results. However, this should create a better opportunity to prepare for future resurrection. b) COVID-19 pandemic should awaken the importance of e-tourism implementation. c) COVID-19 pandemic is considered as the main external barrier factor which should be considered. d) There should be better collaboration between all tourism polytechnic in Indonesia to create a better standard for curricula. However, it should not leave out local wisdom and must prepare for the next challenge in the tourism industry.

Afterward, the results can be concluded that COVID-19 acts as the main external factor which affects the tourism industry today. This condition should be a challenge and should be overcome by collaborating with other tourism polytechnics, tourism stakeholder associations, and local people. It can also be overcome by optimizing e-tourism (Gretzel et al., 2020; Javed & Tučková, 2020), and balancing hard skills and managerial skills from next-generation as local human resources. (HONG, 2018; Ribeiro et al., 2020), which can be obtained inside the tourism polytechnic.

On the other hand, internal barrier factors, such as denial from local people and old traditions which become classic problems, can be minimized by implementing Tourism Area Life Cycle in tourism destination analysis. (Butler, 2019). Tourism Area Life Cycle consists of seven components, which are: exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation, decline, and rejuvenation (Butler, 2019; Singh, 2020). However, the implementation of the Tourism Area Life Cycle should examine local wisdom to create better judgment and analysis results, especially in Indonesia (Setiawan & Wiweka, 2018).

The human resources problem in the NTB tourism industry has already become one of the main reasons why a tourism study program is urgently needed. This conclusive decision can convince the Tourism Ministry and Education Ministry to fully support Tourism Polytechnic in NTB. Meanwhile, tourism study in Indonesia should also consider not just hard skills, but also managerial skills and other soft skills needed for upcoming big tourism destinations (Abdillah et al., 2015; Anugrah & Sudarmayasa, 2017).

The second result is from a benchmarking study among other tourism polytechnics in Indonesia. As previously explained, benchmarking includes four main points, which are: (1) study program profile, (2) campus facility, (3) alumni readiness, and (4) feasibility study for the tourism study program. From these points, we can summarize some main points as follows:

1) Study program profile

Most of the other tourism polytechnic being trapped in classic common hard skill as their major course. Thus, it should be developed by paying attention to the new era caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. It also must consider many new and upcoming aspects, such as the IT capability to support e-tourism (Fu & Chakpitak, 2018). In Indonesia itself, most of the tourism polytechnics implement their major course as the following picture.

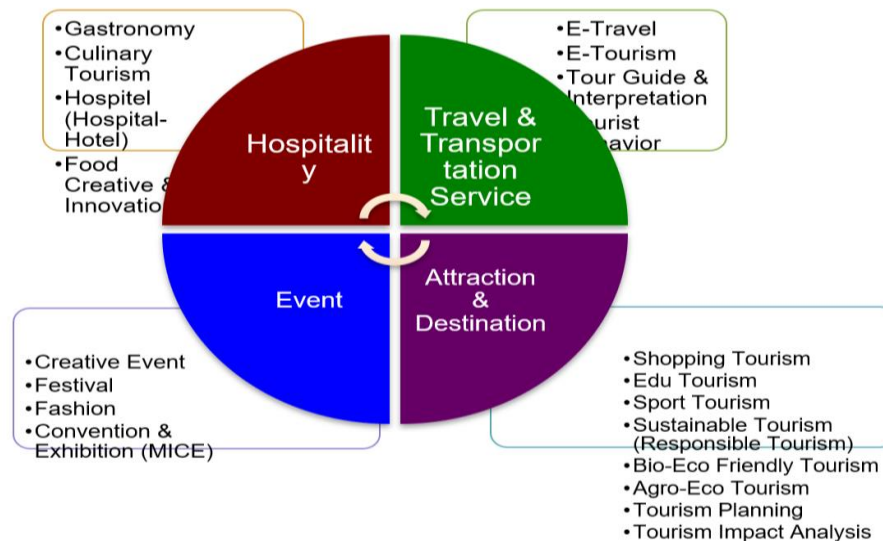


Figure 1. Body of knowledge of tourism science
(adapted from expert opinion Azril Azahari in benchmarking speech)

2) Campus facility

While back in 2018 and 2019, most of the campus facility in tourism polytechnic are concentrated on infield practice. However, in the COVID-19 pandemic era, distance learning has already changed how the campus facility should be established. IT infrastructure and also supporting facilities for distance learning such as a microphone,

camera, and network, should be properly prepared. On the other hand, the lecturer should also be prepared to optimize the learning process in a new era.

3) Alumni readiness

As the core purpose of this research, alumni readiness must be given full pay attention. In the benchmarking process, we have an expert opinion from Azril Azahari presentation which advices on how to balance between local wisdom and hard skill to create Tourism Sustainable Development. Tourism Sustainable Development itself, as part of Tourism Area Life Cycle. [Butler \(2019\)](#), has become a major term in the tourism industry. On the other hand, this condition should overcome an internal barrier, such as denial from local people. In short, the following figure can explain how this expert opinion can be done.

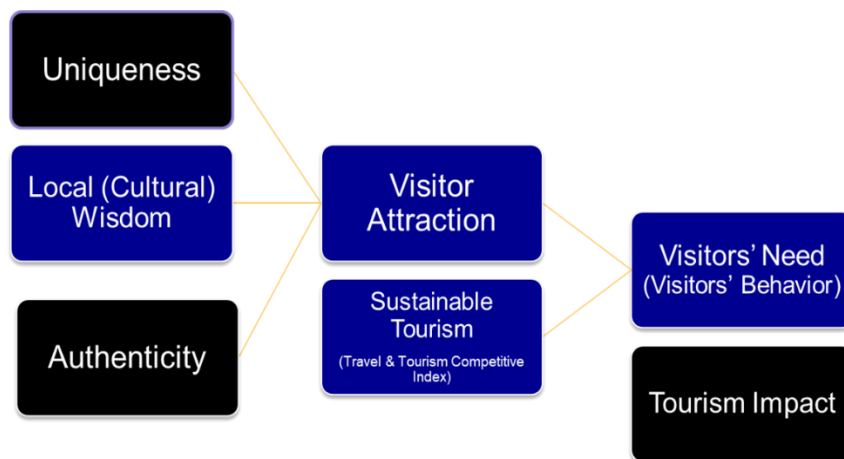


Figure 2. Local wisdom and alumni readiness connectivity
(adapted from expert opinion Azril Azahari in benchmarking speech)

4) Feasibility study of a new study program

The final main point from the benchmarking process is the feasibility study for a new study program in tourism polytechnic. Other tourism polytechnics usually have more than 1000 students for all classes. However, the alumni are far from the expectation, and most of them are not traceable whether they utilizing their skill in the tourism industry or not. They also did not have proper documentation on how a feasibility study of opening a new study program in tourism polytechnic should be done. The main question, which is how to connect between local wisdom, Tourism Area Life Cycle analysis, or even tourism destination requirement, is not properly answered in the benchmarking process. Thus, it means that a feasibility study in opening a new study program should be done more carefully in the future.

Conclusion

Based on the previous discussion, we can have some conclusions and answers for the research questions, which are: (1) NTB is a unique combination of the tourism industry and has big potential destinations that already exist (Gili Trawangan, Labuhan Bajo) and upcoming modern destination (Mandalika) which should become better in the future (2) Internal barriers factor such as old tradition or denial to immigrants can be overcome by optimizing local human resources, especially for the youngster to become students in tourism polytechnic and studying hard skill as well as managerial skills (3) In solving problems of external barrier factor which is COVID-19 pandemic, tourism polytechnic should also provide IT skills to support e-tourism implementation (4) Human resources problem in the tourism industry has a root cause in early vocational higher education which holds important factors in overcoming the problems ([Cardon & Stevens, 2004](#); [Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011](#)).

This study also stated that skillful human resources does not merely have good hard skills but also have good managerial skills and IT skills to create a sustainable tourism industry. A good preliminary feasibility study before opening a new program study in tourism polytechnic is needed. Finally, we should also care about the local wisdom

and uniqueness of each province, especially for NTB as a case study. Thus, we can avoid the denial factor and also optimize local people in becoming their tourism governance manager.

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