

# Psychological Costs on Tourism Destination

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**Abstract**—This study discusses the concept of psychological costs, especially its shape in the context of tourism, the theory behind it, and furthermore, proposes a theoretical framework and practical interventions to understand psychological costs. Psychological costs consist of two types, namely psychological costs originating from the destination and psychological costs that come from tourists. This study is a literature-based study by looking at the concept of psychological costs from the perspective of a number of theories such as the theory of transfer costs, decision-making theory, value-expectation theory, planned behaviour theory, top-down spill theory, coping theory and comfort theory. The results of the study indicate a number of curative and preventive interventions that can affect the planning of costs, psychological costs and coping abilities carried out by tourists. However, this intervention effort requires the involvement of various stakeholders starting from the government, tourism actors and local communities.

**Index Terms**—tourist, psychological cost, tourism destination, planning

## I. INTRODUCTION

The development of tourism in Indonesia was recorded starting in the 1960s when Indonesia had a large oil and gas supply to contribute to its economic growth [1]. However, in the 2000s, when income from the oil and gas sector diminished, tourism became one of the leading sectors to support the Indonesian economy. Interestingly, Indonesia's tourism sector is developing not only because of foreign tourist visits, but also supported by the movement of domestic tourists, which has even become the structure of the majority of tourists [2].

In fact, the tourism sector has contributed 5% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) involving 12 million workers and a visit of 14 million foreign tourists in 2017[3]. Income from tourism has helped finance various development programs in Indonesia. However, the development of tourism in Indonesia is still inferior compared to other countries in Southeast Asia and other tropical regions. Indonesia is still ranked 42nd in world tourism competitiveness, below Thailand (rank 34), Malaysia (rank 26) and Singapore (rank 13th) [4].

Explicitly the communication factor, infrastructure and destination quality are often regarded as the main

factors that hinder Indonesian tourism. Nevertheless, the inhibiting factors, in general, can be categorised into economic and social factors. Economic factors can be easily evaluated and improved, but different from social factors are far more difficult to modify.

The study from Reference [5] states that psychological factors are part of social factors. In a previous study, Reference [6] emphasised that psychological factors can influence the decline in tourist visits, for example, incidents of terrorism such as the Bali bombings and the events of natural disasters in Indonesia that cause fear for tourists to visit. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the psychological costs which are one of the considerations for tourists to visit a tourist destination and plan steps to reduce or eliminate psychological costs so that the increase in tourist visits in Indonesia can be higher than before.

## II. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL COSTS CONCEPT

Psychological costs, emotional costs or psychic costs, basically are mental stress or emotional problems faced by someone when dealing with an experience [7]. These costs are non-monetary and cannot be transferred [8]. Psychological costs are associated with negative emotions, and vice versa, psychological benefits are associated with positive emotions [9]. Thus, the motivation to carry out tourism activities (recreation) implicitly shows a psychological advantage. Therefore, the existence of psychological costs in tourism activities is certainly not desired by tourists. Furthermore, the difference between psychological benefits and psychological costs determines human life quality [10]. However, it should be noted that this difference is calculated not based on intensity, but based on the frequency of profit and psychological losses [10].

In the field of tourism, psychological costs can include aspects of uncertainty and risks faced by a tourist in visiting an unknown tourist destination [11]. Psychological costs also arise when a tourist has anxiety at a potentially threatening environment [12]. A number of negative affections that can show a psychological expenditure include fear, resentment, worry, guilt, anger, stress, anxiety, shame and discomfort [10].

These psychological costs can then be transformed into a real cost for tourists because they have to spend a number of efforts (including financial efforts) to reduce mental stress, emotional problems, uncertainty, risk and

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worry [13]. As a result, even though the cost of a tourist destination looks cheap from a financial perspective, tourists can still see it as expensive when the tour journey has high psychological costs. This, of course, can be a consideration and inhibit the intention of tourists to carry out tourism activities.

The concept of psychological costs is developing from the field of marketing, where researchers observe that consumers still have the consideration of switching from one product to another even though the tangible cost (measurable as financial) is very low [14,15]. As a result, consumers tend to buy products with brands that are familiar to them rather than by looking at the price. For newcomer brands, this becomes a marketing problem where they have to attract consumers from old products to their products as much as possible by understanding and reducing the psychological costs faced by consumer prospects.

Psychological costs still have a certain place for customers to decide on a product even though economic costs are clearly visible. The study from Reference [16] shows that the high or low economic costs that consumers have to spend do not have a major effect on the psychological costs so it remains be their concern. In other words, the psychological cost of a product cannot be changed by intervening on economic costs, for example offering a tourist destination that is being hit by a natural disaster by reducing ticket prices, or vice versa, raising the price of accommodation. Psychological costs are detached and can only be overcome by psychological interventions.

A number of previous studies have found that psychological costs have a significant influence on an individual's decision to consume. For example, psychological costs are known to be a strong factor in determining the choice for cycling to work [17]. This psychological cost includes costs for the risk of accidents and conflicts with other drivers. Other studies have also found that psychological costs are a determining factor for an individual to determine the route to work [18].

### III. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL COSTS IN TOURISM

Psychological costs generally include mental stress, emotional problems, uncertainty, risk and concern. In the context of tourism, psychological costs can be divided into two, namely psychological costs originating from the destination and psychological costs that come from the tourists themselves. The source of psychological costs in tourism originating from destinations include:

#### 1) *Distress*

A number of destinations try to attract tourists by showing a picture of a quiet and calm destination. Even so, this expectation can be hurt if the destination is crowded with visitors in reality. Tourists do come but have a big challenge to attract them back for the next visit. This can be found for example in a number of

monumental destinations such as the Pyramid and the Taj Mahal.

#### 2) *Queue*

The distress in tourism activities can be caused by a long queue. Queues can be faced by tourists at least at three points, namely: parking, ticket purchase and attraction entry points. This often happens on holidays and long holidays at a number of destinations. In world-class destinations, this queuing situation can even occur every day. Queues and congestion are issues of psychological costs in tourism that are commonly found in various locations in the world [19].

#### 3) *Low-quality infrastructure*

Low-quality infrastructure leads to a number of concerns psychological costs. This concern can be in the form of threats about an accident or crime. This has not included the inconvenience that straight away emerges from low-quality infrastructure.

#### 4) *The smell of garbage and waste*

In destinations with high population density, waste must be managed very well, otherwise, the presence of garbage and waste will disturb the tourists' conveniences. Therefore, the inconvenience caused by the uncomfortable smell of garbage and waste raises psychological costs.

#### 5) *Lack of attractions*

Tourists come to a destination with a certain time. This period is estimated to be enough to enjoy the existing destination. However, when the time is still available, but there are no more attractions that can be enjoyed by tourists, the psychological costs of boredom emerge. For example, this can be felt in high-speciality destinations such as markets that are a landmark of a city or even the city itself, such as Singapore.

#### 6) *Excessive prices*

In a number of destinations, especially in developing countries, the price of an item is distinguished between local tourists and foreign tourists. This is considered reasonable because of the assumption that foreign tourists visit a destination that is cheaper than in their place of origin so that their purchasing power is relatively higher to the local price. Low-priced from the perspective of tourists can come from the cost of living in developed countries or from the income of tourists who are above average so they can travel abroad. However, it stills can lead to psychological costs if the foreign tourists compare the price of the item they bought with local tourists for the same product. Even if these tourists do not realise a low price for local tourists, there is a possibility that foreign tourists can compare prices in their home countries or in other places that are equal so it causing psychological costs. This situation will, in turn, trigger the issue of discrimination for foreign tourists which raises new psychological costs arising from a sense of justice and equality.

#### 7) Noise

Noise is a normal situation in big cities so tourists often come to locations that seem quiet and calm to stay away from the crowd. However, sometimes tourists find a tourist destination that is noisy and not in accordance with marketing campaigns offered by tourism providers. This noise can arise due to the crowd of tourists and the sounds of the environment around the destination.

#### 8) Forests/waters that are dirty and lack of biodiversity

This is often faced by aquatic tourists and eco-tourists at national parks. Brochures often show beautiful biodiversity and environment, but in fact, it fails to discover due to crowd or noise factors, or because the fauna showed is indeed living wildly and tends to stay away from tourists so it is difficult to be watched. This condition is a source of psychological costs generally found in Indonesia such as in Benoa, Bali and a number of national parks. Psychological costs therefore caused by the immediate appearance of unsatisfactory destinations or because tourists compare the length of time with the energy they sacrifice to arrive at the destination.

#### 9) Vandalism

Vandalism is the behaviour of irresponsible tourists by destroying the aesthetics of tourist destinations, thereby reducing the value of these destinations. To anticipate vandalism, tourists are generally given a considerable distance from the object of attraction so that tourists cannot touch or too close to the object. Generally, this is done at monumental destinations such as Stonehenge or temple buildings. Unfortunately, this has an impact on psychological costs for tourists who hope to be closer to the destination.

#### 10) Modernisation

Cultural destinations strongly emphasise authenticity and historical values. However, some modern global brands such as fast food restaurants are urged to be present in that place and take strategic locations so it inhibits tourists to get a beautiful view in order to feel the atmosphere in a different environment. For example, most the restaurants with global fast food brands are present in historical regions which become icons in major cities of the world.

The above discussions are psychological sources that are commonly found in tourist destinations in various parts of the world. Sometimes, this situation creates a paradox. For example, distress comes from destinations that are too popular so many tourists visit in a high number beyond the carrying capacity that can be provided by the destination. Many of these are a result of uncontrolled mass tourism, though, alternative tourism such as ecotourism can also have psychological costs. Not only by the problem of far distance to arrive at destinations and boring, but also from the lack of facilities is that intentional because of prioritising the environment.

Moreover, other sources of psychological costs can arise from more macro situations such as riots, political problems, social conflicts, terrorism and natural disasters. These present a psychological cost for tourists who want to decide to travel to a tourism destination. This psychological cost can continue to occur as long as tourists are in the destination and will diminish when tourists leave the destination.

The sources of psychological costs from the point of view of the destination have discussed above, however, tourists with various backgrounds also allow the emergence of its own psychological costs as human individuals. Reference [10] revealed the existence of 13 domains of life that were subjected to psychological costs from the side of the tourists themselves, which are:

- 1) Social life: dealing with an unpleasant companion or fellow traveller, do not have enough personal time and space because of a companion or tourist.
- 2) Leisure and recreation: fatigue because it consumes too much energy in recreation, uses too many cellphones so it doesn't enjoy the destination.
- 3) Family life: travelling without a family, failing to contact the family due to telecommunications network problems, involved in a family conflict when travelling.
- 4) Lovelife: lack communications with a partner due to telecommunications network problems, feeling homesick, unable to share travel experiences with a partner.
- 5) Art and culture: failure to communicate with local people because of language problems, feeling offended with other inappropriate behaviour based on their own culture, finding other people who do not respect local culture.
- 6) Work life: forced to work while travelling, need to work while travelling, feeling like not wanting to go home and work.
- 7) Health and safety: feeling tired and tired, sick, gaining weight, worried about getting sick.
- 8) Financial life: do not have enough money to enjoy the destination in full, go home with large debts and spend money on unnecessary things.
- 9) Spiritual life: a feeling of wasting money and not getting spiritual satisfaction while travelling, reflecting on life and realising that their life is empty and has no purpose.
- 10) Intellectual life: not get learning opportunities as expected in the destination.
- 11) Personal life: miss their partner, friends, and family, feel bored and alone.
- 12) Culinary life: not getting the variety of meals, not getting food and drinks that are familiar to be found in the hometown.
- 13) Travel life: feeling uncomfortable in the journey, feeling tired moving from one place to another.

#### IV. FUNDAMENTAL THEORY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL COSTS

The existence of various psychological costs above, both those originating from the destination, macro and micro influences, and from tourists can be understood using the value theory approach. Value-expectation theory holds that in a behaviour that has a purpose (in this case is a tourist visit), an individual makes a decision by weighing and evaluating the perceptions of the consequences of the visit. Value-expectation theory contains two considered elements namely value and expectation [20]. Value reflects the purpose of the tour itself. Meanwhile, expectations include confidence in what the individual get when he/she visit the destination. This theory is actually a development of the theory of decision making [21].

Furthermore, this theory is related to the theory of planned behaviour [22]. The theory of planned behaviour argues that the intention to behave is determined by attitudes, subjective norms and perceived to behave. The value of the value-expectation theory is a factor that determines attitudes towards the destination [23]. There are four values that tourists can use in taking attitudes towards destination visits: emotional value, renewal value, financial value and quality value [24]. Financial value and quality value are also expectations as they reflect a person's expectations of the financial costs incurred and the quality that will be obtained at the destination.

Value-expectation theory explains why psychological costs can arise when a tourist gets service at the destination. This cost arises when the quality of a tourist's expectations at the destination is not as expected. The sources of psychological costs originating from the destination show how the expectations of a tourist are finally not met by the destination, which in turn leads to dissatisfaction.

Meanwhile, the psychological costs that derive from individuals who appear in the consumption process at the destination are explained by the comfort theory [10]. According to the comfort theory, a tourist's satisfaction in travelling is determined by how far the tourist activity gives tourists freedom from work and control, and how broad these activities provide knowledge, involve, stimulate and give spontaneity to tourists. When tourists do not get those factors in their journey, then, the dissatisfaction is emerging.

The dissatisfaction ultimately leads to a decrease in the subjective well-being of tourists whose relationship can be explained by using the bottom-up spillover theory on subjective well-being [10, 25, 26]. According to this theory, satisfaction with consumption experience is a concrete affective aspect. The affection aspects of humans themselves have several levels ranging from the most concrete to the most abstract. A sense of well-being is at the most abstract affective level. Between the most abstract affective aspects at the top and the most concrete

affective aspects at the bottom, there are the middle-affective aspects that cover various domains of life, such as the 13 domains mentioned above. The affection that arises at a concrete level then spills through these levels and ultimately has an effect on the overall well-being at the highest level, and hence, this theory is called the bottom-up theory. As a result, psychological costs, as a form of negative affect, which arise in the concrete domain of tourist travel, spill over and lead to changes in the overall life satisfaction of a tourist.

Furthermore, according to coping theory, when a person cannot avoid events with high psychological costs, the person will do a coping mechanism [27]. Reference [28] in their study explained that coping mechanisms were needed to avoid an individual from a more severe situation, namely the emergence of stress and serious health problems.

There are two types of coping mechanisms, namely mechanisms that focus on problems and mechanisms that focus on emotions. (i) A mechanism that focuses on problems is an action-oriented mechanism to reduce the source of psychological costs. This mechanism is an action to manage relationships with stressors. When an individual perceives a problem that cannot be controlled or he/she has tried but failed [29], the individual enters the second stage namely (ii) an emotional mechanism, where the individual will take steps that prevent the psychological costs incurred, or in other way try to reduce the costs. In this case, regulation is carried out on an emotional response against stress [30].

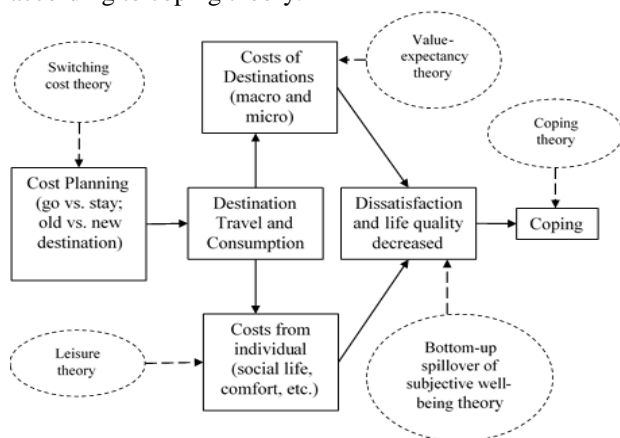
The forms of coping that focus on problems includes dealing with the source of stress, planning problem solving and seeking social support (Folkman et al, 1986). Meanwhile, the forms of emotional-focused coping include taking distance, self-control, accepting responsibility, avoiding/staying away and positive reevaluating [31].

Based on the discussion above, a model can be proposed that describes the types of psychological costs and the stages of their appearance in Figure 1. This picture begins with the aspect of cost planning which can be explained by the theory of transitional costs from the marketing perspective. However, psychological costs have actually become a consideration in the transition cost theory because there are already considerations to make a decision to travel to a familiar place or to another place (for example, if tourists are accustomed to travelling to Thailand vs. the alternative to travel to Indonesia that has never been done) or make a decision to travel or not travel.

After the decision is made, tourists take travel actions and consume the destination. In this process, there are two types of psychological costs, namely the costs of the destination and the costs of the individual. The cost of the destination is explained by the value-expectation theory, where costs arise because the values and expectations at the time of planning are not met. The psychological cost of an individual arises because of the

general expectation factors explained by the theory of comfort are not fulfilled when travelling.

As a result of these two types of psychological costs, the dissatisfaction arises. According to the bottom-up spill theory, the subjective well-being of tourists will be affected by these psychological costs, leading to a decrease in welfare, stress and the risk of health problems. For this reason, tourists take coping steps, according to coping theory.



Source: Researcher

Figure 1. The Psychological Cost Model of Tourist Visits

## V. PREVENTIVE AND CURATIVE INTERVENTIONS

In the context of tourism, psychological costs are one aspect of carrying capacity [32, 33]. The carrying capacity is conceived as a quantitative parameter that reflects the ability of the destination to endure the costs arising from tourism activities, including psychological costs for the community and tourists. However, this concept has been abandoned due to its high complexity and unclear concept [34, 35].

The understanding of psychological costs above, however, demands the need for both preventive and curative interventions so the tourists do not have high psychological costs. It can be seen from Fig. 1 that there are four points where interventions can be taken. The first intervention can be done during planning, which is a preventive intervention. At this stage, the tourism provider is trying to convince potential tourists by providing facts in order to come to their destination by offering various services that can eliminate psychological costs that might be taken into consideration by potential tourists.

Moreover, tourists can make comparisons with other destinations and with extreme situations at this stage, namely making decisions not to travel. Promotional efforts must be carried out honestly, including not manipulating photos to create the impression of low psychological costs, in reality, they have high psychological costs. Many tourists who come to tourist places finally decide to never come back again because they feel cheated by advertisements that make excessive expectations that ultimately are not fulfilled.

The second intervention can be carried out on the psychological aspects of the destination. These interventions have several options, ranging from those that require high costs to low-cost (easy and simple interventions). Congestion and long queues require huge financial costs to get a general solution because it requires additional capacity to overcome the limitations of the destination space itself. In other words, improving the quality of infrastructure can be done but it definitely requires high investment.

Meanwhile, intermediate investment costs can be given to process rubbish and waste and increasing the number of attractions. In addition, interventions in the form of decreasing prices of goods such as souvenirs at tourist attractions can also be easily carried out through price policies or subsidies. The noise problem can also be reduced by technical steps that are not too expensive such as adding various sound absorbers such as trees or carpets. Other problems such as dirty place can be cleaned regularly with high commitment from the government and local communities; the existence of biodiversity can be added to the breeding program; vandalism can be overcome by routine security patrols, including at closing time; and modernisation of cultural destination sites and ecotourism can be prevented by empowering surrounding communities or creating special areas far from destinations, specifically for restaurants and modern accommodations.

Macro factors (such as ideological, political, economic, social, cultural, defence and security factors) that affect tourism are more difficult to control because they are systemic and explicitly cover a wider range [36]. However, the government already established several agencies to manage these problems and take preventive measures. Agencies such as the National Counter Terrorism Agency / Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Teroris (BNPT), National Police, Military, the National Disaster Management Agency / Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Bencana (BNPB) and its structures at the regional level, the Regional Disaster Management Agency / Badan Penanggulangan Bencana Daerah (BPBD), community, political parties and parliament / Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat (Daerah) DPR(D) are stakeholders needed to overcome macro problems such as terrorism, social conflict, riots, domestic and foreign political crises and disasters.

The third intervention can be carried out on the psychological aspects of the tourists themselves. This intervention is simpler and relies on the role of the tour guide. Tour guides must be able to manage social interactions between tourists, provide suggestions so that tourists do not run out of energy or directing tourists' attention to things that could support the excellence of tourist process. Tour guides also need to supervise and take action to prevent cultural conflicts between tourists and local communities. In addition, tour guides can also provide brief local language lessons and explain the

various prices of goods at the destination, including tips for tourists to get regular costs.

Thus, tour guides need to be equipped with spiritual competence, morality and life philosophy, so they can deliver the impression that the trip is not merely materialistic and hedonic visits. Tour guides must also provide education about destinations so that tourists can obtain intellectual satisfaction from the destination. In addition, charismatic guides, with qualities such as self-confidence, good body language, a good listener, open minds, and be able to talk positively about individual tourists.

In addition, the government also plays an important role in intervening in the psychological cost aspects that arise from tourists, such as providing good information technology infrastructure to prevent psychological costs that come from loss communication between tourists and families in their hometowns. This is why the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) makes information technology infrastructure readiness as an indicator of tourist destination competitiveness.

The tourism ministry needs to provide a booklet that contains simple words in local languages taught by tourist guides to visitors so they can create simple communication with the local community. In addition, tourism authorities can train local residents not only to produce local specialties, but also culinary from tourist home countries that commonly visit the destinations.

Meanwhile, the health agency or ministry can provide emergency services and First Aid Kit facilities for tourists. And of course, the transportation ministry needs to create the transportation facilities that are as comfortable as possible for tourists so they don't feel tired on their trip.

The fourth intervention can be carried out when tourists are in the coping stage. This is taken if indeed psychological costs have already arisen and faced by tourists. In this case, the tour guide again takes a big role. Tour guides need to quickly devise a strategy to overcome the problems faced by tourists. If indeed this cannot be taken, tour guides must be able to provide facilities for tourists to carry out emotional coping. For example, tour guides and destination managers can provide special space for rest, reading or interesting spots, and so on as is provided by hotel accommodation providers.

## VI. CONCLUSION

There is still a lot of work to improve the competitiveness of Indonesian destinations from the perspective of the psychological costs that must be considered by tourists. The tourism providers and the government need to attract tourists not only by doing physical promotions generally carried out but also by eliminating psychological costs for tourists. The corrective steps must be carried out both in macro, micro and personal aspects. This can be done by making a

strategy to reduce psychological costs as part of national and local tourism program planning policies. For this reason, the potential of the destination which raises high psychological costs and provides reduction for these costs needs to be explored. Research in the field of psychological costs in tourism is also still very low, thus providing opportunities for academics to conduct further research.

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