

## REVIEW OF THEORIES AND MODEL OF RESEARCH ON LIMINALITY IN TOURISM

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**Abstract:** *Liminality is important in the tourism field to measure the tourist experience from their satisfaction, whether the actual reality experienced meets their expectations. Conceptual research method using the semi-systematic literature review approaches are used in this study. This paper reviews some selected theories and models to comprehend more on the concept of liminality with tourism. For that, the theories and models that would be examined are Five Phases Tourism Model (1966), SERVQUAL Model (1988), Liminality Tourism Structure Model (2019) and Classical and Post-modern Liminality Comparative Theory (2016). The Five Phases Tourism Model is a model used to describe the experience in various phases: expectation, away trip, tourist destination, return trip, and memories, while SERVQUAL Model is used to measure the quality of service. The Liminality Tourism Structure Model describes the tourist experience from various elements such as physical, social, and emotional. Finally, the Classical and Post-modern Liminality Comparative Theory compares the classical liminal experience of society in ancient times and the liminal experience of post-modern society. The literature review results show that the theories and models aid in explaining tourist experience using five phases and was influenced by several aspects. Thus, the combination of all these existing models related to liminality will help to understand tourists more deeply and measure the level of tourist satisfaction that are seen from their experience, expectation, and the actual reality being experienced by them.*

**Keywords:** *Theory, Model, Liminality, Tourism, Tourists Experience*

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### Introduction

The concept of liminality was pioneered by Arnold Van Gennep in 1909 in his book entitled Rites of Passage which showed the role of liminality as one of the attributes needed to explain any changes that occur in a place, country, social status, age and others (Wels et al., 2011). In this case, Van Gennep used rituals to mark a transition in an individual's social life. Initially, the concept of liminality was introduced to describe the phases of transition in a society that indicate a transition from one state to another. Liminality can be seen from three aspects which are (i) the desire to defy the realm where individuals wish to escape from the daily routine and

transit to different zones which are out of the ordinary, (ii) the body's resilience that allows individuals to imagine and use new identities that are not such as their daily lives and (iii) the occurrence of a transition from a place of origin to an area outside the individual's habit.

The study of liminality has existed for a long time ago. This can be seen through an initial study conducted by Turner in 1974 on the Ndembu ethnic community. Turner described liminality as a between-and-between state in the transition phase and are closely related to human beings, including socially, politically and economically (Turner, 1967). Turner's description regarding the relationship of ritual and liminality was further developed in his book entitled *The Forest Symbols*. According to him, the process of liminality involves a complex sequence of episodes in a given space and time that allows the between-and-between situation to be deeply understood.

Therefore, liminality is important to describe conditions that occur in a particular space and time. Furthermore, specific concepts are needed to describe the phase of an individual's transition from a normal state to an unusual state. The development of the liminality concept has caused this concept to be applied in various fields such as geography, sociology, anthropology, tourism and others to describe temporary conditions, landscapes and experiences gained. The uses of liminality theories and models in tourism are necessary to explain the tourist experiences based on their expectations and actual reality (Thomassen, 2009). Hence, these theories and models will be able to support and justify the tourist liminal experience through several phases where tourist are getting the chance to break away from the norms of their daily life which is an important aspect of tourism (Bristow & Jenkins, 2020; Harmon & Dunlap, 2017). This will help our attempt to understand tourist more deeply by observing their experience through five phases rather than only focusing on their experience at the tourist destination.

## **Methodology**

Conceptual research method is used in this study by using the semi-systematic literature review approaches or also known as narrative review that are considered as the most common type of descriptive review. This semi-systematic literature review is widely used to overview research area and track development over time. Furthermore, it is also designed for topics that have been studied by various groups of researchers within diverse disciplines by reviewing every related article that are relevant to this topic. All relevant research that has implication towards this topic can be identified and fully understood. Thus, the development of liminality concept from ethnology to various fields including tourism and geography can be explained by studying related theories and models. Next, the data extraction process for this paper is informal where it is not standardized or fully systematic and the synthesis of these data is generally a narrative juxtaposition of evidence (Xiao & Watson, 2019).

## **Findings**

### **The Concept of Liminality**

The concept of liminality was introduced by a French ethnologist, Arnold Van Gennep, in 1909. However, the concept of liminality became popular in the 1960s when Van Gennep's original work regarding liminality, *The Rites of Passage*, was translated into English. Furthermore, the idea of liminality is widely used when an anthropologist, Turner, developed the concept of liminality in his study related to rituals among the Ndembu community. The

concept of liminality is derived from the Latin word *limen*, which means 'threshold'. Liminality is an etymology related to the basis of space (Van Gennep, 1960).

In general, the concept of liminality is often associated with rites of passage. Liminality is a phenomenon that refers to the transitional phase in society. This phase marks the transition of society from one state to another (Thomassen, 2012). Thus, liminality can be defined as a ritual that marks a transition in the social life of a society, i.e. the ritual refers to every ritual that has a change of place, situation, social position and age. This transition exists in every part of society's life. According to Nelson (2019), the concept of liminality carries the meaning of 'being on the threshold', which refers to an everyday cultural and social intermediate (betwixt-and-between) process. This condition indicates an individual who is out of place and time out of their ordinary. The liminal space in this liminality can be a real place, an imagined place or even a threshold place that can be crossed symbolically. Liminality is characterized as temporal, i.e. a state that does not remain in the intermediate state (Pritchard & Morgan, 2006). Furthermore, the liminal phase in this state of liminality can last for a long period or even just a few seconds.

Liminality is a concept described as a phase of reflection, i.e. the individual is introduced into a state of transition from separation to merging. In this situation, an individual will go through three processes, namely separation, liminal threshold and aggregation. This liminal state will cause an individual to be on the 'threshold'. Individuals who are in the liminal phase will go through three stages, called (i) uncertainty or unclear circumstances, (ii) the possibility of adapting to new norms, rules and values as well as (iii) pre-integration. This level of uncertainty or unclear situation can cause an individual to be in a state of unconsciousness and the potential to lose his original identity. After observing the actual situation that is taking place, the individual will become more careful with his actions. In this case, the individual will release his past to pass the 'threshold stage' where the individual is considered equal to other members of society (Muldoon, 2019). This stage will cause an individual to recreate his or her identity. The next stage, which is the possibility for individuals to adapt to new norms, rules, and values, merges with new groups that are not from the original group of individuals to gather information and then face transformation in the new group. Individuals must gather all the information that produces group values, norms and rules. On the other hand, the pre-integration stage shows that an individual is almost ready to get out of the liminal state after going through the 'threshold' and adjusting to the new situation. However, an individual must have appropriate behaviours before exiting the situation or liminal space (Bristow & Jenkins, 2020).

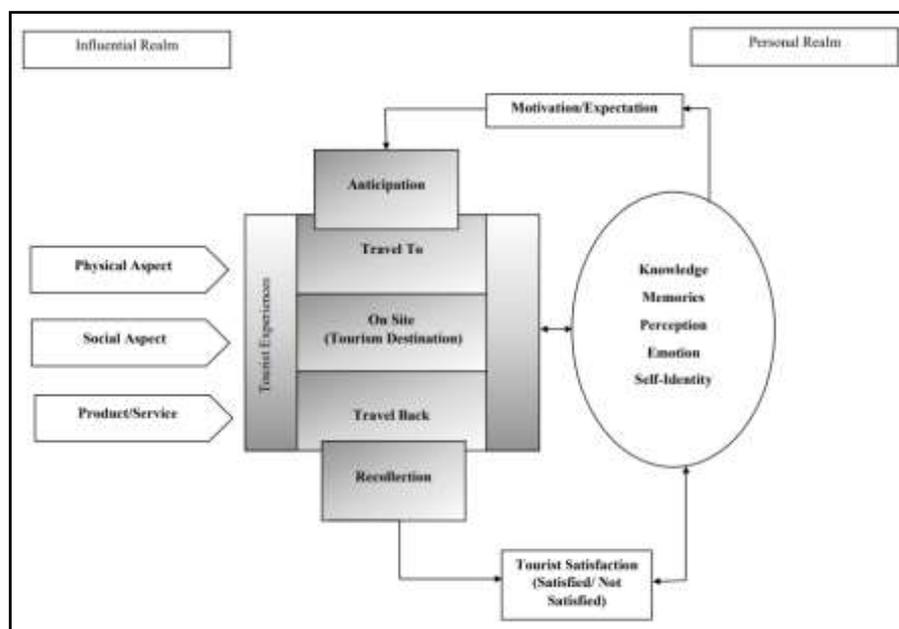
In short, the concept of liminality is considered to be an individual transition phase. This process of liminality occurs through three phases, namely the phase of separation from the real state of an individual, the phase of marginalization of the original life of the individual while in the liminal state, and recombination to the original life (Teodorescu & Calin, 2015). The concept of liminality is a matter that can be interpreted in various ways according to its context. Liminality in tourism refers to the shift of tourists when leaving the comforts gained at home to cross time and space and some 'thresholds' with various unknowns. Liminality in tourism also refers to the phase of liminal separation where the holiday experience allows individuals to feel renewed before being reunited to a generating area (their original location) full of social responsibilities and constraints (Andrews & Roberts, 2015).

### Theories and Model of Liminality In Tourism

Some several theories and models are used as a basis to discuss studies related to liminality in tourism, namely the Five Phase Tourism Model (1966), SERVQUAL Model (1988), Liminality Tourism Structure Model (2019) and Classical and Post -Modern Comparative Theory of Liminality (2016).

#### The Five Phases Tourism Model (1966)

The Five Phases Tourism Model is a model used to describe the tourist experience in various phases. The tourist experience is usually determined by three aspects: physical, social, and the products and services offered at the tourist destinations visited. In this model, there are five phases of the tourist experience. Each phase has the potential to offer various levels of satisfaction to tourists. Data are usually collected through questionnaire after the respondents finish their trips.



**Figure 1: Five Phases Tourism Model**

Source: Adapted from Clawson & Knetsch (1966).

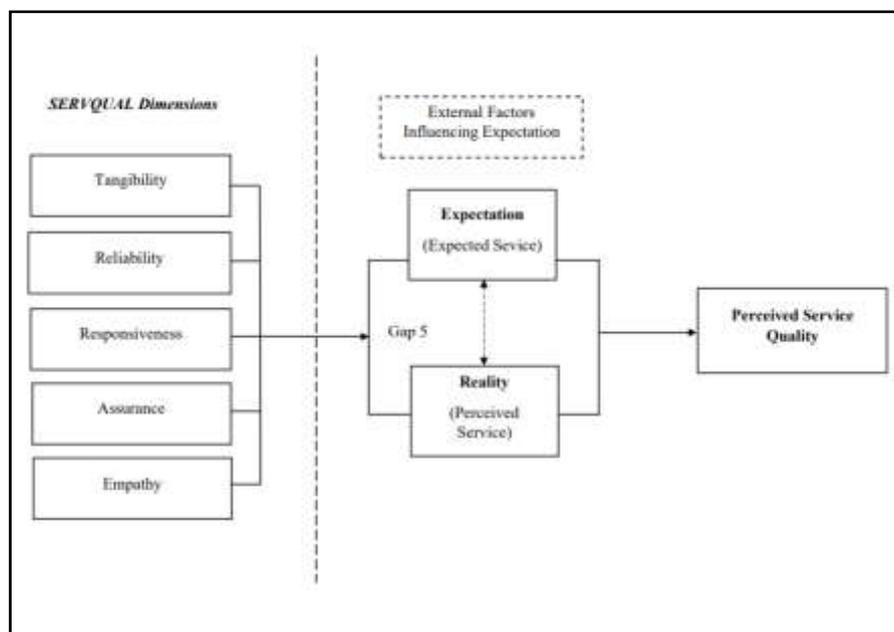
The first phase in this model is the expectation that tourists imagine and plan their trip. During this phase, the tourist will begin to think about their trip. The tourist will plan their trip by reviewing guidebooks, travel review sites, Google Earth and other related resources that are needed. Mindfulness during the anticipation phase has a significant influence on the tourists' evaluation of their travel experience. The more mindful the tourists during anticipation phase, the more positive their trip evaluation in terms of their satisfaction, behavioural loyalty and attitudinal loyalty (Taylor & Norman, 2016). The second phase refers to the journey of tourists towards the destination. This travel phase occurs where some mode of movement is aided by transport such as car, bus, plane, train and so forth. This transition is a part of the tourist's experience. Hence, normally the tourists are typically excited about the anticipated experience.

Next, the third phase refers to the actual conditions and experiences at the tourist destinations. On-site experience is for the opportunities for experience to take place. Tourists could experience something new and unexpected at this tourist destination. The fourth phase is the

return journey of tourists from the tourist destination to the place of their origin. At this phase, tourists usually feel exhausted and their excitement winds down as they re-enter their life because of social constraints and home responsibilities. The last phase is the memory or recollection that the tourist acquires from the tourist destination visited. Good and bad times are remembered. This phase will also influence the next anticipation phase in future. All the phases of this tourist experience will be able to provide knowledge, the memory of the destination, the emotions of the tourist and the discovery of the tourist's self-identity. Thus, the experience of tourists in these five phases of tourism will affect their level of satisfaction with the tourist destination, i.e. whether their expected expectations are in line with the actual reality experienced at the destination visited. In addition, these phases will help to examine the tourist individually by fully understood when viewed as a whole and their liminal experience at the tourist destination through five different phases.

### SERVQUAL Model (1988)

The SERVQUAL model (1988) was introduced by Parasuraman et al., which measures service quality. There are three parts to the SERVQUAL instrument, namely customer expectations, the reality of service and overall service quality. Data are collected through quantitative method by using quota sampling towards 200 adult respondents. This SERVQUAL model leads to expectations (expected service) and reality (actual experience gained), and external factors that can influence customer expectations. In this case, the expectations and reality obtained by the customer will affect the overall quality of service. The level of customer satisfaction can be determined through customer expectations (expected service) and reality (perceived service).



**Figure 2: SERVQUAL Model**

Source: Adapted From Parasuraman et al. (1988).

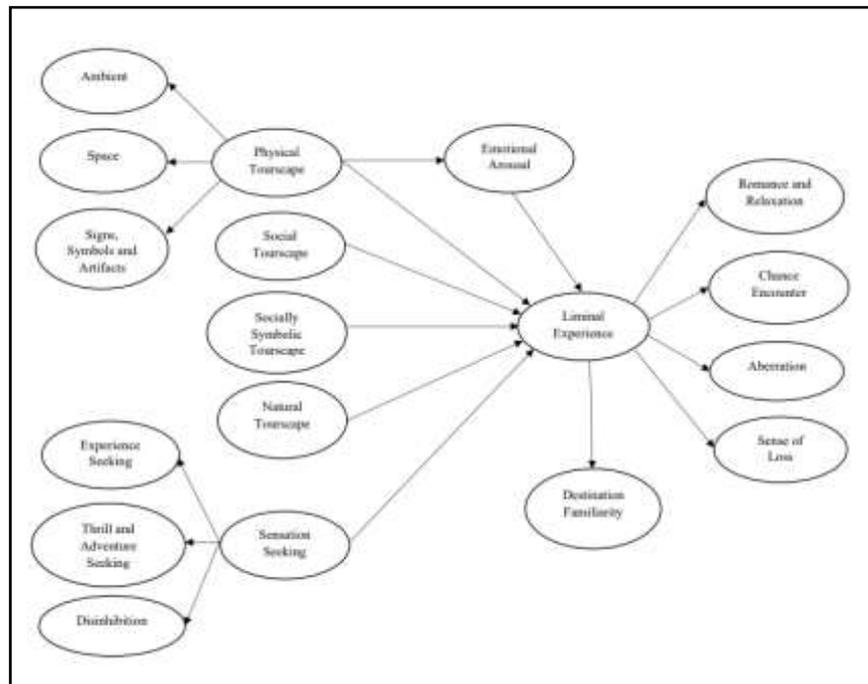
In addition, the SERVQUAL model can be divided into five dimensions, namely tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Tangibility refers to the physical facilities, equipment condition and personal appearance that exist. Reliability is the ability to perform services correctly and accurately, and reliably. Responsiveness is defined as a willingness to

act to help customers and perform service at an immediate rate. Assurance refers to an employee's knowledge and courtesy and his or her ability to instill trust and confidence in customers. Finally, empathy means the concern, the individual attention given by a service provider to its customers. Furthermore, this model will discuss the outcome of perceived service quality that are divided into three stages which are poor perceived quality (negative disconfirmation), "delight" from high quality (positive disconfirmation) and "satisfaction" from adequate quality (confirmation) (Puri & Singh, 2018).

Therefore, this model can be used in determining the satisfaction level of tourists at tourist destinations visited based on tourist expectations and the actual perception of tourists on the reality experienced in tourist destinations. This model is often used to assess tourist service quality (Kowalska & Ostrega, 2020). The appropriate modification and adaptation of the method to the subject of study can make it simple and straightforward tool to obtain answers regarding the consumer satisfaction with the tourism serving by referring to the five gap model which is i) the difference between what consumers expect and what managers think they expect, ii) difference between the management's perception of customers' expectations and the quality specification of the service, iii) difference between service quality and the actual reality, iv) different between the quality of service provided and what is communicated to the customer about the service and v) difference between a customer's expectation of the service and the perception of the experience. Hence, it is important to demonstrate the differences between the expected quality and perceived quality. Thus, the satisfaction level of tourist's liminal experience at the tourist destination can be fully understood by reviewing and comparing their expectation and actual reality experienced by them.

#### **Liminality Tourism Structure Model (2019)**

This structural model of liminality tourism was introduced by Zhang and Xu (2019). This model describes the liminal experience of tourists examined from eight main constructs. In this case, the liminal experience of tourists is gained when travelling to an out of the ordinary environment, free from social constraints and responsibilities. Data collection in this study were collected using personal interviews from tourists in Lijiang, China. Only those who had completed or were approaching the end of their trips were asked to participate in this study.



**Figure 3: Liminality Tourism Structure Model**  
 Source: Adapted From Zhang And Xu (2019).

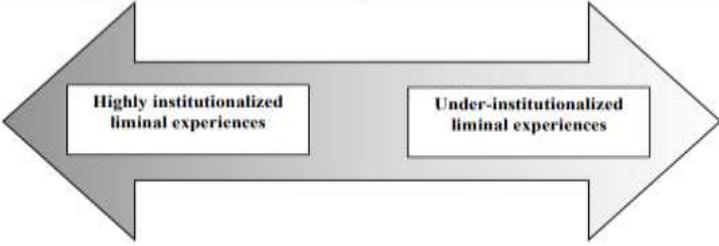
This model describes the liminal experience of tourists derived from experience in terms of physical, social, social symbolism, nature and the search for sensation. Tourists physically acquire the liminal experience of tourism based on the atmosphere, space, signs, symbols, and artefacts in the tourist destination. Furthermore, this liminal experience through the physical will be able to stimulate the emotions of the tourist. The liminal experience in terms of sensations is gained by tourists while seeking experience, seeking pleasure and adventure, and the lack of constraints from real life (disinhibition). Individual knowledge of tourist destinations also affects the level of satisfaction of tourists from the liminal experience gained. This liminal experience gained can contribute to leisure activities and love, opportunity taking, aberration and a sense of loss. Therefore, all major constructs in this model are interconnected with each other.

The results shows that emotional arousal mediates the positive effects of i) social, ii) socially symbolic and iii) natural tourscaapes on liminal experience. This shows that personality can predict individual behaviour especially in a situation where social roles are unstructured and individuals have discretion to determine their own behaviour (Judge & Zapata, 2015). Therefore, this situation can lead individuals to behave in ways that are the most natural and comfortable for them. However, physical tourscape affect the emotional arousal but negatively. Sensation seeking also positively influence liminal experience. The destination that serves as unfamiliar environment to tourists will lead them to temporarily abandon normal norms and accept “abnormal” temporal relationships. Those who have strong need for varied, novel, complex and intense sensations highly tend to experience more liminal experience. Destination familiarity is the control variable in this model. Briefly discussed that the tourist’s liminal experience can be seen from five phases through several aspects such as physical, mental and emotional and social. Hence, it can be seen clearly that tourist’s liminal experience can be affected (positively or negatively) by several aspects.

### The Classical And Post-modern Liminality Comparative Theory (2016)

The Classical and Post-modern Liminality Comparative Theory (2016) was put forward by Ibarra and Obodaru. This theory compares the classical liminal experience (Turner’s classical conceptualization) of society in ancient times and the present, that is, post-modern society. Data collection in this study were collected through conceptual method research.

Turner's Classic Conceptualization	Present Day Extensions
Simultaneous role and identity suspension	Uncoupled or sequential role and identity suspension
Finite, bracketed period	Open-ended, extended period
Highly institutionalized ritual guided by elders; a built-in communities of fellow liminars	Self-guided process, self-made communities
Socially legitimate narrative	Incomplete and culturally problematic narrative; emergence of new scripts
Obligatory nature: the subject had no choice but to undergo liminality	Voluntary nature: the subject can choose to initiate liminality
Outcome is always certain and only one outcome is possible	Outcome can be uncertain and multiple outcomes are possible

**Figure 4: The Classical And Post-modern Liminality Comparative Theory**

Source: Adapted From Ibarra And Obodaru (2016).

This theory explains that liminality in ancient times was more controlled where roles and suspensions of identity were simultaneous, limited duration, ceremonies led by older people in a specially constructed community, socially valid narratives, mandatory and outcomes can always be expected and ascertained because there is only one type of outcome. This indicates liminal experience in higher institutions. Nevertheless, there has been a development of advanced liminality in the post-modern age when the liminal experience is freer and more open than in the past. In this case, the roles and suspensions of identities are unpaired and sequential, long-term processes and communities are driven and constructed by individuals, narratives are incomplete and culturally problematic, occur voluntarily, and unpredictable outcomes where there is more than one result. The liminal experience gained depends on the perception and motivation of the community. Accordingly, liminality in the post-modern age is closely related to the liminal experience of tourists at this time because post-modern society can possess liminal status more easily and freer.

Post-modern theory has identified some major cultural changes in tourist experience due to the development of liminality in the field of tourism field. This can be seen through some influential seminal texts such as Urry’s ‘The Tourist Gaze’ (2002) which had given a new meaning to experiential aspects of tourism. It also reflects a hyper-reality product which is

closely linked to liminality. Thus, the liminality evolved in line with the post-modern theory. At first, the classical conceptualization of liminality by Turner emphasizes that an individual is obliged to enter the liminal state. However, the post-modern theory states that tourists choose to enter the liminal state voluntarily. It is also explained that the tourist experience gained was based on their initial expectations towards the destination image. Hence, the development of liminality has greatly impacted the tourism sector especially through the understanding of tourist's liminal experience through five phases.

### **The Relationship Between Theories And Model On Liminality In Tourism With Tourists Experience**

Theories and models of liminality in tourism are important to explain the tourist experience in detail. This is because the uses of theories and models related to liminality in tourism will show the level of tourist satisfaction with the tourist experience seen based on the expectations and real reality experienced by tourists more clearly. The tourist experience can be described in more detail based on the related theories and models as in Table 1.

**Table 1: Relationship Between Theories and Model on Liminality in Tourism with Tourists Experience**

<b>Theories and Model</b>	<b>Description</b>
Five Phases Tourist Model (1966)	This model plays an important role in describing the transition of tourists from place of origin (generation area) to tourist destination (reception area) in five phases: expectations, outbound travel, tourist destination, return journey, and memories and recollections gained from their travel experiences. This theory is closely related to the aspect of liminality because it can explain the liminal experience of tourists from their place of origin to a tourist destination which allows tourists to feel free from any responsibilities and social constraints. After returning to their place of origin from the tourist destination, any changes that happen to tourists could be discovered.
SERVQUAL Model (1988)	This SERVQUAL model is closely related to the tourist experience. This model considers the expectations of tourists (expected service) with the reality of tourists (services obtained) to measure the level of tourist satisfaction that can be examined from several dimensions, namely tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Through this model, the quality of the liminal tourist experience can be determined based on the overall quality of service obtained. Therefore, this can help to explain the liminal experience of tourists in detail.

Theories and Model	Description
Liminality Tourism Structure Model (2019)	This Liminality Tourism Structure Model is one of the latest models that discusses the liminal experience of tourists in tourist destinations. The liminal experience of a tourist is seen from eight main constructs that can impact travel satisfaction. These eight key constructs play an important role in providing a satisfying liminal experience to tourists. Therefore, the provision of physical, natural, social, emotional and other aspects to provide a meaningful liminal experience to tourists can be explored.
Classical and Post-modern Liminality Comparative Theory (2016)	This Classical and Post-modern Liminality Comparative Theory shows the transformation of liminal experience from classical liminal experience (Turner's classical conceptualization) that occurs in the life of ancient society to liminal experience in a post-modern society that occurs in today's life. The development of the concept of liminality is very significant compared to liminality in the past. This is because post-modern liminality is more open and freer. To that end, the liminal experience of tourists that takes place is due to their own choice and not by coercion.

### Conclusion

Thoroughly, the liminal experience of a tourist is not an easy thing to explain. Therefore, these liminality related theories and models will be able to describe the perceived tourist experience using five phases that are influenced by several aspects to understand tourists more deeply. Furthermore, these theories and models will help to measure the level of satisfaction among tourists that are seen from their experience, expectation and the actual reality being experienced by them. The challenge now is applying the theory and model of liminality in tourism to measure the tourist experience that will cultivate the concept and aspects of liminality in the tourism sector. In other contexts, most tourist experience studies still lack application of existing liminality theories and models to measure tourist experience. Therefore, it is time for innovation in measuring the tourist experience based on the theory and model of liminality in existing tourism to provide a more meaningful, holistic and complementary tourist experience.

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