



TOUR PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT [PART 2]

THE PROCESS RESEMBLES ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE THEORIES

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Practical Problem

Tour operators play a pivotal role in designing travel products for escorted tours, private groups, independent tourists, and other travel companies¹. Secondary destinations are often added to a tour product to enhance the travel experience and logistics. These destinations rely on tour operators to bring in visitors, as they do not have the resources to attract them^{2,3,4}. Despite the complexity of tour product development, there is a lack of literature on the subject.

Research Question

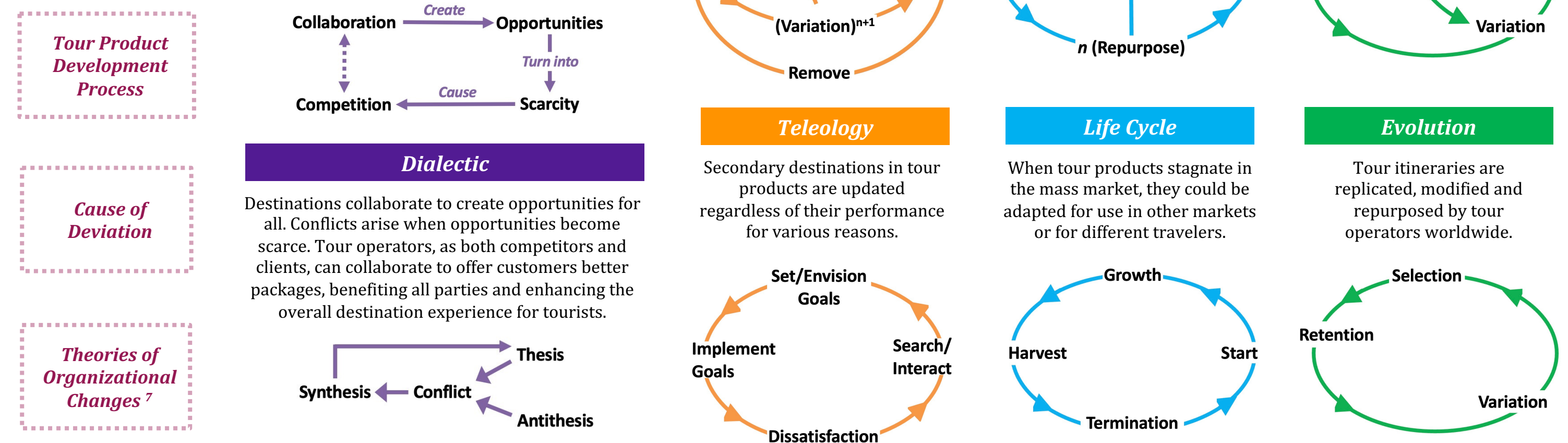
What is the process of tour product development in the context of secondary destination selection?

Design & Method

The study employs a qualitative approach to investigate the tour product development process inductively⁴. Over 200 email invites were sent to members of the National Tour Association and the U.S. Tour Operators Association. Interested tour operators had to complete an online screener to ensure active participation in tour product development. Thirteen diverse participants, each with 20+ years of tourism experience, representing different regions globally, were interviewed online for 50-75 minutes using a semi-structured format. The interview transcripts were sent to participants for verification, then coded and analyzed using the *Thematic Analysis Method*⁵.

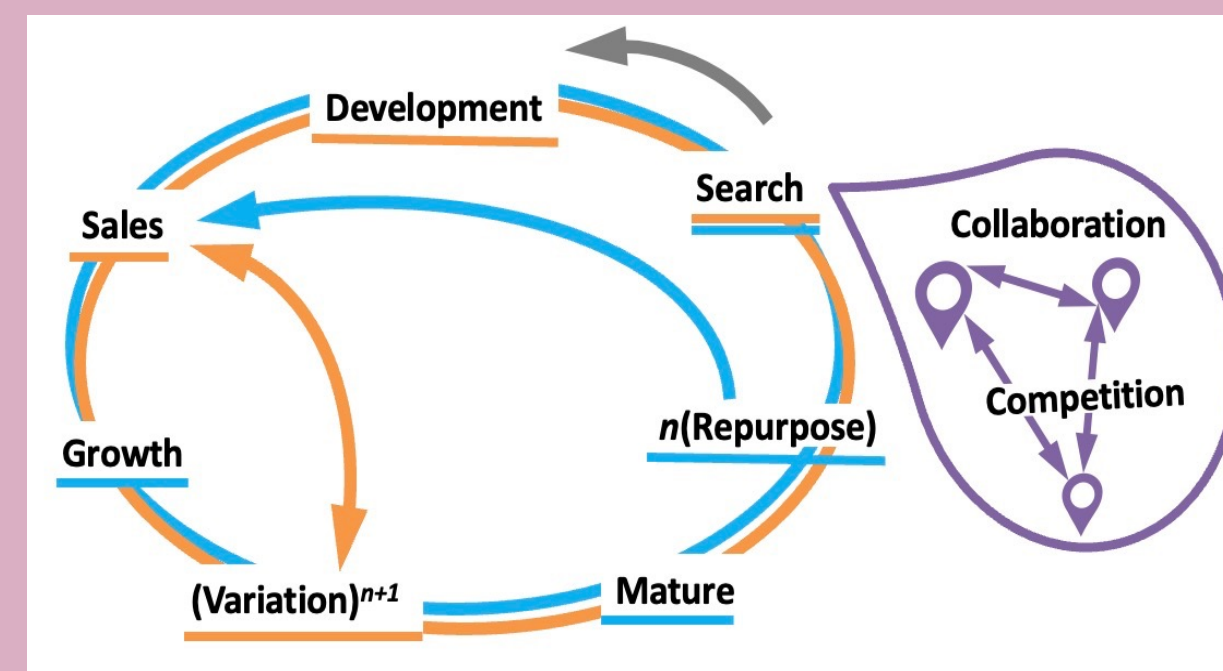
Findings & Discussion

The study shows that tour product development involves a complex interplay of various change models, including collaboration, competition, R&D, repurposing and variation. These models bear similarities to, yet are distinct from, the Typology of Theories of Organizational Development and Change⁷, which includes dialectic, teleology, life cycle, and evolution.



Interrelationship

The diagram on the right serves as a comprehensive overview of the tour product development process, which intricately weaves together the four change models. To amplify their attractiveness among tour operators, tourism suppliers in secondary destinations must engage in collaborative efforts while simultaneously ensuring competitiveness by offering tourists optimal experiences. In this regard, tour operators are continuously updating their products. If a particular product exhibits prowess, it may create more variations to cater to diverse groups with varying travel preferences. If the local market for a specific tour is stagnant, tour operators may eliminate it from the scheduled bus tour but retain it in their group customization categories. Tour products are unique in that they may be revived with minor modifications to the itinerary or marketing message, ultimately appealing to tourists who have previously taken the tour.



Contributions & Future Research

The study identifies four models in the tour product development process: dialectic, teleology, life cycle, and evolution. These models are distinct from the motors in the typology of Theories of Organizational Change⁷. Using all four models to outline the complex nature of tour products is a novel application of the theories. By identifying these models, the study provides a deeper understanding of the intricate development and dynamic evolution of tour products.

Moreover, the study provides practitioners with valuable insights into the factors that trigger tour operators' decisions to change their tour products, specifically the change of secondary destinations and experiences on the itineraries. This information can assist destination stakeholders in better strategizing their approach towards tour operators and considering their inclusion in tour products. The findings of this study can be used to influence the development of tour products and ultimately contribute to a more equitable redistribution of tourism's economic wealth.

It is, however, important to note that the present study primarily focuses on secondary destination selection, which is a crucial component but not the sole aspect of tour product development. Therefore, future research may extend the scope of the study to encompass other aspects of tour product development.