

Enchanting Labuan Bajo As Super-Priority Destination in Indonesia: Implementation of Place Branding Through Digital Platform As A Form of Technological Advancement

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Abstract - Labuan Bajo is a super-priority destination that has become a premium tourist location. World-class attractions, easy access to transportation, and adequate amenities are Labuan Bajo tourism's main potential. This study aims to describe the implementation of place branding through digital tourism by using digital media platform to increase tourist visits and attract potential visitors. The research applied descriptive qualitative methods with an in-depth interview and non-participant observation through digital media. The results showed that digital media, especially social media had a significant influence to attract the tourist and show a significant increase during 2017-2019. Due to the expanded use of internet and the revolution of information technology, various types of online communication such as social media marketing and internet marketing by website are used as instruments for Labuan Bajo marketing communication. According to the results of this study, it can be stated that implementing several activities through the combination of offline and online media, could expand the promotion of place branding for *Labuan Bajo as a super-priority destination in Indonesia*.

Keywords: *Tourism Marketing, Communication, Place Branding, Digital Media, Social Media*

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is an essential element in the economic development process in improving the national economy, the region, and the communities where natural tourism is located. Indonesia is a country rich in culture because it has many kinds of tribes, customs, and culture [1]. Indonesia tourism has become a potential industrial sector for the region. As an industry, the tourism sector involves all the requirements, such as transportation, accommodation, services, and attractions that require a lot of manpower [2]. This potential will bring many benefits for communities, economy, society, and culture.

Each region and city in Indonesia have much potential in the tourism sector that is unique and attractive. Therefore, "Wonderful Indonesia" becomes Indonesian branding to promote its tourism as a naturally and culturally wealthy country with tourism potential in each region. Each region must have its branding aligned with the Master Brand "Wonderful Indonesia" to strengthen Indonesia's nation branding and promote a positive image as a tourist destination.

Several cities in Indonesia have done their branding sufficiently, where it plays a vital role in the tourism marketing of a city or region. In the mid of 2017, the government has officially launched the latest branding for ten leading tourist destinations in Indonesia. Each of those branding is: Colorful Medan, Wonderful Riau Island, Enjoy Jakarta, Stunning Bandung, Java Cultural Wonders (DIY-Jateng), Majestic Banyuwangi, Bali The Islands of God, Friendly Lombok, Explore Makassar, and Coral Wonders (Bunaken, Wakatobi, Raja Ampat) [3].

The Indonesian tourism development that proliferates has made the President of the Republic of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, along with the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia develop ten priority tourist destinations in Indonesia which have been selected based on the concepts of 3A: attraction, accessibility, and amenities (kemenpar.go.id). Those ten destinations are: Danau Toba (North Sumatera), Tanjung Lesung (Banten), Kepulauan Seribu (DKI Jakarta), Tanjung Kalayang (Bangka Belitung), Candi Borobudur (Central Java), Bromo Tengger Semeru (East Java), Mandalika (NTB), Labuan Bajo (NTT), Wakatobi (North Sulawesi), and Morotai Island (North Maluku). Even though ten locations have been appointed as new destinations for tourists, the government has prioritized four main tourist destinations as a super-priority destination: Danau Toba, Borobudur, Mandalika, and Labuan Bajo.

The government plans to construct of the Labuan Bajo tourism area from the four super-priority destinations, which will be carried out in stages from 2019-2020. Labuan Bajo is intended to become a premium tourist location so that it will increase the tourist visits as well as investors. Labuan Bajo has various destinations that attract visitors, and it is a gateway for those who want to continue their destination to Komodo Island, Rinca Island, and Padar Island. Labuan Bajo has extraordinary cultural strength and nature.

With its natural exoticism, this area has become a world-class marine tourism destination. The most significant place branding is received by Labuan Bajo that is located on West Manggarai, East Nusa Tenggara. Tourism in Labuan Bajo is currently showing an increase in tourist number for the last three years (2017-2019). Many factors drive the increasing

flow of tourist visits, including the massive promotion of tourism in Labuan Bajo, assisted by *Badan Otorita Pariwisata Labuan Bajo Flores* (BOPLBF).

Badan Otorita Pariwisata Labuan Bajo Flores (BOPLBF) is the executing agency work under the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia. The tasks of BOPLBF are to coordinate, synchronize, and facilitate the planning, development, and control in Labuan Bajo tourism area, also in the authority zone of the Labuan Bajo tourism area [4]. BOPLBF has implemented a strategy of maximizing cultural strength and authentic local content to develop tourism products in the Labuan Bajo area, which presents the premium tourist destinations and develops the destinations, other supporting facilities, and infrastructure.

One way to continue maintaining Labuan Bajo as a super-priority/premium destination is by improving citizens' and non-citizens' and the domestic and foreign tourists' experiences of Labuan Bajo. The experience of Labuan Bajo begins with word-of-mouth stories, visualization in the form of images on social media, and discussion in various other media that make people curious about the place. Then the experience will follow, and at the end, the experience about this place is posted. BOPLF has designed the travel pattern that will increase tourists' length of stay in Labuan Bajo. There will be more attractions that show the appeal of the typical port city culture [5].

The growth of Labuan Bajo as a tourism centre in the East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) Province has opened the doors for other business sectors to increase the capacity, both in terms of product competitiveness and the ability of human resources (HR). Tourism in Labuan Bajo is not just about the development of amenities sectors such as hotels and restaurants, but also about the growth of tourist visits and how to show its beauty in nature and scenery. The tourism in Labuan Bajo is now developing as an entry point for community economic development [6]. BOPLBF is committed to supporting the development and strengthening of human resources in the tourism sector, so Labuan Bajo could be a super-premium tourism destination.

In 2017, the Ministry of Tourism and Department of Tourism of NTT had compiled the branding of Enchanting Labuan Bajo to make Labuan Bajo be known and accepted by the broader community as one of the must-visit tourist destinations in Indonesia, and it can compete with the other destinations [7]. Labuan Bajo must have its branding like the other cities so that all regions will understand it. Through the branding Enchanting Labuan Bajo, under the master brand "Wonderful Indonesia", the number of tourists, especially foreigners, are expected to rise. This brand promotes Labuan Bajo tourism to the world.

It is expected that the growth in tourist visits will continue to increase, especially in super-priority/premium destinations. This increase can occur with sustainable tourism development which includes three aspects: world-class attractions, access to transportation, and adequate amenities. The potential of Labuan Bajo could be an opportunity to increase tourist visits, mostly for foreign travelers.

In the globalization era, a city must take the advantages and potentials in all fields such as nature, culture, ethnicity, tourism, infrastructure, and culinary to build a strong

positioning in the public's minds. Branding in the tourism destination context started to gain attention to the growing importance of the tourism sector. Many advantages, such as brand awareness, reputation, and a good perception of the city or region, will be obtained by implementing place branding. According to Anholt, place branding is believed to be an effective way to make a city famous and encourage investment, increase tourist visits, and popularize cities in the world's eyes [8].

Branding dramatically influences the market segmentation that is targeted. When a place or destination has a brand, it will be easier to influence the location market segmentation [9]. A place must have its branding to show its identity and characteristics, to compete globally with other places. Besides, branding a place will create an image in the public and visitors' minds, thereby increasing tourists' satisfaction. Therefore, places, including cities, regions, and countries, define a position and promote themselves as brands worldwide [10].

The development of Technology and Information (IT) in the era of industrial revolution 4.0 encourages the adaption efforts from various sectors, especially the tourism sector [11]. Another strategy was implemented to attract tourists and promote the place branding of Labuan Bajo by implementing the digital tourism. Digital tourism is one of the effective strategies to promote the superior potential of an area through a technology-based platform [12]. Digital tourism is the development of tourism in Indonesia by promoting tourism destination through digital media or social media. Currently, in this situation we are obliged to dominate the market. In addition, we have to open minded with everything in digital, because the key is "the more digital, the more global", so we are required to be more interactive, mobile, and personal.

The emergence of various digital platforms has grown into an opportunity that can be optimized for its role in encouraging the progress of the national tourism sector. Indonesia can maximize the tourism sector by utilizing various digital platforms such as social media and website. Some examples of social media that are often used are Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Line, WhatsApp, etc. Social media play an important role in people's daily life. It affects all aspects of human life, including tourism.

Digital media has become an indicator of the existence of tourist destination. Various topics and serve as places for exchanging experiences, opinions about tourism destination have discussed in the process of making tourist visit decision [13]. A location or destination with its shown potential can overcome other strong brands by implementing the digital tourism and utilizing the digital media platform. A brand is formed socially and is culturally independent. The brand should start with an understanding of the sense of place and its meaning as experienced by residents, similar to the branding of Enchanting Labuan Bajo and super-priority/premium destinations that use location or place to build tourism goals [14].

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Tourism Marketing Communication

The tourism industry is a massive industry that requires an understanding and ability for the marketing expertise to develop consumer behaviour dynamics. Tourism marketing is

defined as the process by which tourist needs can be accommodated together with a tourist organization or region [15]. Tourism marketing is an activity of tourism institutions or agencies to innovate, communicate, deliver, and share offers that have added value to customers, partners, and the relentless community [16]. Tourism marketing activities focus primarily on tourism products or services and their development and the distribution channel to their target markets [17].

Tourism marketing can also be used to find out the trends in consumers or society, increase the distribution channels and create communication campaigns. In this case, the tourism industry must ensure that they can convey the current value to the consumers, such as perceptions price, the quality, image, and the economic and social aspects of consumers [18]. The tourism industry provides the final product and offers solutions to satisfy consumer needs [19]. It is concluded that tourism marketing is how the tourism industry can reach the value consumers desire and match the products or strategies with consumers' desire by utilizing the marketing function.

Effective and efficient communication will strengthen the basis of marketing, which is communication and selling. Companies or organizations use marketing communication to inform, persuade, and remind the consumers, either directly or indirectly, about the products and brands that they show [20]. Communication plays an essential role in marketing a product. Without communication, consumers and the public will not know the existence of a product that is being marketed [21]. In general, the purpose of marketing communications is to drive the target audience's interests and desires.

A comprehensive marketing plan will guide a successful marketing campaign to sell a product [22]. Marketers who are BOPLBF, and the communicators must be able to create messages that have both rational and emotional appeal. Marketing communication's essential aspects to increase interest and tourist visits include advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, and direct marketing [23]. Due to the increasing number of visitors, BOPLBF strives to build the image of Labuan Bajo as a super-priority or premium destination so that it will increase more tourists or visitors to visit Labuan Bajo.

Marketing consists of a mixed strategy which controls tactical marketing tools that a company or organization combines to produce the response that they want from the target market [15]. The marketing mix consists of product, price, place, and promotion. A marketing mix can increase drive sales and improve promotional performance [24]. Moreover, expanding communication can reach a broader market for the tourism object. Marketing communication mix is done to encourage the effectiveness and efficiency of marketing communication, which consists of eight main communication models, including advertising, sales promotion, events and experience, public relations, direct marketing, interactive marketing, word of mouth marketing, and sales personnel [25].

B. Digital Tourism Marketing

The development of Technology and Information (IT) is a gap that the government can optimize its role to return the tourism sector to its positive trend. The digital tourism is one of the effective and efficient strategies that can be used in promoting tourism and creative economy products through

technology-based or digital platforms. Through this movement, the tourism sector will have a wider space to carry out various innovations. In addition, all information related to tourism and creative economy can be more attractively and distributed massively through existing digital platforms, such as social media. Currently, tourists will travel and look for destinations by searching information (look) and ordering the attractive tourism packages (book) and pay by online. In other words, tourists do the search and sharing using digital media.

Digital tourism marketing utilizes application technology media that focuses on positioning the place and tourist destination; increase brand equity; tourism development; internal and external marketing [26]. The digital tourism marketing also used to conduct tourists research, because at the same time, it provides direct contact with its tourists through several activities such as social media, blogging, vlogging, and online communities [27]. It connected to the tourists, especially tourists with Y and Z generation, because it integrated into their media content and social relationships.

Digital tourism marketing affects various aspects of tourist behaviour, including brand awareness, access to information, opinions, attitudes, visit decision, post-visit communication, and evaluation of these different aspects to improve the place or destination's competitive position and ultimately lead to increase the place branding [26]. The era of digital marketing with the internet continues to evolve. Currently, digital tourism marketing, commonly referred as Tourism 4.0, combines online and offline strategies to get the engagement from its tourists [28]. Tourism 4.0 focuses on forming digital branding for destinations with marketing content that attracts consumers with various media application technologies.

C. Social Media Marketing

According to Kaplan and Haenlin (2010), social media is an internet-based application that uses Web 2.0 technology, where users can use this application to create and exchange information with one another [29]. Social media nowadays is among the 'best possibilities available' to an item to get in touch with potential tourists [30]. Social media is defined as a tool used by its users to share various kinds of visual information, such as images, videos, writing to audio or sound [31]. The marketing context through social media not only refers to direct marketing, such as buying and selling activities, but also indirect marketing that uses several contents that gather the interest of social media users [29]. The contents in form of photos and videos are related to the place or destinations that gather the interest of tourists to visit which will expand the branding of its potential tourist destinations.

D. Place Branding

Place branding is one of the most popular concepts, generally in the marketing of places and especially in tourist destinations [32]. Place branding is a marketing activity that supports the creation of names, symbols, logos, wordmarks, or other graphics, to identify and differentiate the destinations. It delivers the promises of a unique and memorable travel experience that is related to the destinations. It also serves to consolidate and strengthen the pleasant memories from the experiences which are provided by the destinations. The aim

is to create an image that influences the consequent decision to visit the destination [33].

Anholt provides a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of a place brand called City Brand Hexagon as a tool that primarily assists in branding efforts [8]. The evaluation components are as follows: (1) the presence, refers to the international status of a city and how much people know the city; (2) the place, refers to the physical aspects, such as how beautiful and pleasant the city is; (3) the potential, which points out the opportunities that the city has to offer in various activities; (4) the pulse, refers to how much people are attracted to the city; (5) the people, this component examines the local population for openness, friendliness, as well as safety issues in the city; (6) the prerequisites, relates to the basic quality of the city, standards, costs of accommodation and public facilities.

Based on the opinion about place branding above, it can be concluded that a city or region needs to be treated like a general product to build a strong positioning in the minds of the public. Various benefits such as brand awareness, reputation, and a good perception of a city or area will be obtained by applying a place branding. The purpose of place branding is to create an image that influences consumer decisions to visit these destinations. The image that is shown, is the view or impression of a person or a group of people towards an object or organization based on knowledge and experience, thus influencing their attitude.

E. Destination Branding

Destination branding is an outline that develops a strategy and an evaluation framework to assess the effectiveness of a tourist destination branding [34]. Its function is to strengthen the memorable memories of a destination experience. Destination branding is built on several factors, such as history, art, culture, politics, geography, and the government and stakeholders' help in sharpening the brand. A destination brand's complexity is divided into four categories [35]: natural conditions, political, economy, and people.

Marcello Risitano Ph.D. in "The Role of Destination Branding in the Tourism Stakeholders System" [36] stated that to create a strong destination branding, it can refer to the following aspects:

- Brand culture, which is how destination branding can reflect the characteristics of a destination based on cultural aspects of the community or society (beliefs, traditions, rituals, etc.), also the aspects of the destination itself (historical sites, monuments, archaeological sites, old buildings, etc.)
- Brand character, related to the promise of a destination in providing its experiences, such as integrity, trustworthiness, and honesty
- Brand personality, how a destination is likened to a human personality in everyday life: down-to-earth, cheerful, have a good imagination, high class, have an adventurous soul, and many more
- Brand name, which must be unique, easy to pronounce, and easy to remember. Usually, the destinations that are ready to market their products use specific words in their brand

- Brand logos (symbols), which, in a destination branding, define the strength of a destination through a visual appearance, such as the beauty of the destination, famous monuments, unique traditions, and others. Not only in the form of pictures but the type of font and the color are also included in the brand logos (and symbols)
- Brand slogan (tagline), that are needed to communicate the brand in a more persuasive way to attract visitors.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

The type of this research is qualitative descriptive research. Qualitative descriptive research produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior [37]. Qualitative research methods rely on the description of the primary data supported by the secondary data. The qualitative research method is used to better understand of the phenomena from the psychological aspect, behavior, attitude, responses, opinions, feelings, desires, and expectations of a person or group [38].

Qualitative research methods aim to explain the depth of a phenomenon through data collection. Researchers are an integral part of the data; it means that researchers are actively involved in determining the desired type of data. Thus, researchers have to be directly involved in the field, making this type of research subjective (Kriyantono, 2014). Qualitative methods are known with several research methods: focus group discussion (FGD), in-depth interview, observation, and case study (Kriyantono, 2006). The researcher collects the data by observing and interviewing [37].

Thus, selected respondents were interviewed by in-depth interviews to explore certain descriptive studies. Non-participant observation might have been done to investigate events (the process of events). Describing and analyzing the data based on real conditions became the focus of this study. A conclusion was drawn in the form of a general understanding of those facts.

There is an object of research, something that the researcher observed very deeply, such as activity, people, and certain places. The object of this research is Labuan Bajo. There are also the research subjects who are the source of data to collect the information regarding to the research problem. Sources of data are the subjects from which the data were collected. In this study, subjects who have the parameters can reveal the problem and enable the data collection. The subject of this research is BOPLBF, a public service agency that is designed as a particular institution to accelerate the development of Labuan Bajo as one of Indonesia's super-priority tourism destinations.

IV. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

A. An Overview of Labuan Bajo Place Branding as a Super Priority Destination and Its Potential Tourism

Tourist attractions in Labuan Bajo offer various extraordinary nature attractions such as beautiful natural scenery, exceptional coastlines, and a panorama that can be enjoyed by every Labuan Bajo visitor. Not only Labuan Bajo, but there are also several tourist destinations in Flores island that can be visited by tourists. One of them is the Wonder of the World, Komodo. The national park of Komodo is the main attraction that presents Eastern Indonesia exotic animals.

Therefore, tourists are compelled to visit the beauty of East Nusa Tenggara in that area.

Labuan Bajo's status has increased as a world-class destination. Massive development was also carried out to emphasize Labuan Bajo as a super-priority destination. Various additional facilities were built to support tourist convenience. Labuan Bajo, located in West Manggarai Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, has many tourist attractions, where the tourists can enjoy the complete packages from marine tourism to the beautiful views from the top of a magnificent hill. Labuan Bajo has an extraordinary development after changing its status that makes a very positive growth every year with the increasing number of tourists. Many factors were driving the increasing flow of tourist visits, including the massive promotion of Labuan Bajo tourism. The development of attractions, amenities, and accessibility is continuously carried out to have a positive impact. Labuan Bajo has become a tourism gateway in East Nusa Tenggara to increase its residents' economy and welfare.

Labuan Bajo has various potential destinations and has an attractiveness for its tourism. Currently, the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy and *Badan Otorita Pariwisata Labuan Bajo Flores* is transforming Labuan Bajo's potentials into superior quality products, in which sustainability principle must be considered. In optimizing the potential of Labuan Bajo and other tourist areas in Flores Island, collaboration with various parties is needed. Collaboration is carried out to generate tourists' trust, so they can return to visit Flores.

East Nusa Tenggara Province Department of Tourism, central government, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia collaborate with local stakeholders to become a supporting factor in implementing several

activities carried out by BOPLBF through place branding Labuan Bajo as super-priority destination in Indonesia. With the previous place branding, Enchanting Labuan Bajo, which is made by East Nusa Tenggara Department of Tourism and Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy in 2017, it is possible to combine the previous place branding with super-priority destination that currently held by Labuan Bajo. Place branding can be used to show the iconic of Labuan Bajo as enchanting tourism. Place branding Enchanting Labuan Bajo is support-based for branding Labuan Bajo as super-priority destination. Those branding will generate a strong positive image in the tourists and public minds if both Enchanting Labuan Bajo and super-priority destination can be promoted well.

The combination of place branding Enchanting Labuan Bajo and super-priority destinations can differentiate Labuan Bajo from the other places or tourism. Therefore, the main target of the implementation of place branding will be achieved. The income that is received by the local area will increase, and the tourism area of Labuan Bajo will become an exclusive tourist area by providing enchanting and super-premium destinations. It is expected that tourists can extend their length of stay, because the aim is not only to increase the number of tourists who visit Labuan Bajo, but also to increase their length of stay.

B. Tourist Flows and Purpose of the Visit

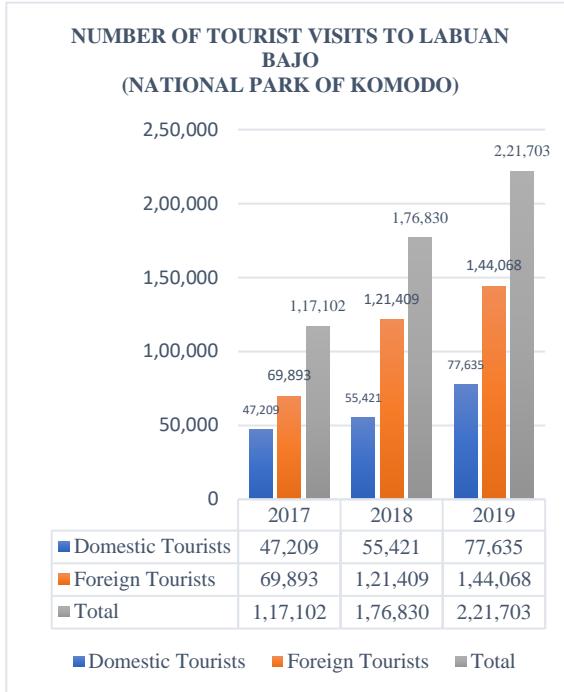


Figure 1 Number of Tourist Visits 2017-2019

“Figure 1” In the last three years, the tourist visits in Labuan Bajo show a significant increase during 2017-2019. This data was recorded by Badan Otorita Pariwisata Labuan Bajo Flores (BOPLBF). In 2017, the number of domestic tourists reached 47,209 people, and the number of foreign tourists reached 69,893 people. So, the total number of visits to Labuan Bajo in 2017 was 117,102 tourists.

In 2018, the number of visits had increased, consisting of 55,421 domestic tourists and 121,409 foreign tourists, with a total visit of 176,830 tourists and an increase of 59,73% from the previous year. Meanwhile, in 2019, domestic tourists reached 77,635 people, and the number of foreign tourists reached 144,068 people. The total number of visits was 221,703 tourists, with an increase of 72,22% compared to 2018.

From the data recorded by BOPLBF and Komodo National Park Office, the increase in tourist visits to Labuan Bajo is due to the attractiveness of komodo on Komodo Island, which becomes an icon of East Nusa Tenggara tourism. The tourists that come want to see the giant lizard whose natural habitat only exists on Komodo Island, East Nusa Tenggara. The number of factors that have encouraged an increasing flow of tourist arrivals to include the massive promotion for Labuan Bajo and the National Park of Komodo. Besides, direct flight services from various regions such as Jakarta, Surabaya and Bali to Labuan Bajo also support the flow of visits.

The position of Labuan Bajo becomes a starting point to visit the National Park of Komodo so that it exposes the National Park of Komodo as one of its main attractions. The existence of ancient giant lizards or komodo population spread on Komodo Island is a powerful magnet. Also, referring to the UNESCO website, the National Park of Komodo is included in the UNESCO World Heritage list. The potential wealth of ecotourism in Labuan Bajo is also the reason for many tourist

arrivals, which is the reason for Labuan Bajo to develop its tourism into a premium destination on an international scale.

C. Implementation of Tourism Marketing

Badan Otorita Pariwisata Labuan Bajo Flores (BOPLBF) carries out several activities as a Labuan Bajo super-priority place branding implementation form. BOPLBF uses many ways to increase Labuan Bajo's image and brand awareness in implementing Labuan Bajo's branding as a super-priority destination. Brand logos (symbols) are used as the identification and differentiation function from other destinations. The logo defines the strength of Labuan Bajo through a visual display that shows Labuan Bajo's icon, komodo, which is a strong captivation in attracting the tourists to visit Labuan Bajo.

The position of Labuan Bajo as a tourist gateway has developed this city to be a super-priority destination. The tourism infrastructure urban planning and support must continue so that tourism in Labuan Bajo can transform into the primary sector and contribute to the Indonesian and regional economies. When the tourism of Labuan Bajo has increased, the people's economy increases. The development of Labuan Bajo as super-priority destination supports the quality of tourists who come to visit.

In promoting Labuan Bajo as a world-class tourist destination, the main focus is to explore its various tourism potentials. The domestic tourism target market is currently being focused on by conducting many promotional activities in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy. Also, the process of structuring the tourist areas in Labuan Bajo continues to be developed to advance its area as a premium destination based on 3A elements: accessibility, amenities, and attractions. Besides, several things were also carried out to develop Labuan Bajo as a super-priority destination, including: (1) industrial and institutional development; (2) identifying and regulating investor who enter Labuan Bajo; (3) implement branding, advertising, and selling.

By carrying out various types of communication in the Labuan Bajo tourism marketing implementation, BOPLBF aims to identify its target market, the various potential customers who might become loyal consumers, and encourage them to return to Labuan Bajo. The tourism market is influenced by numerous types of information from various channels or media, both online and offline. This might arouse their satisfaction and interest in the tourist destination choices that are provided by Labuan Bajo. BOPLBF has carried out various promotion tools as a form of development and introduction continuation for Labuan Bajo as super-priority destination with exclusive attractions. Labuan Bajo tourism marketing promotion involved the use of communication instruments by BOPLBF as their marketing communication.

V. DISCUSSION

BOPLBF carried out its promotion in various media and communication to picture the state tourism and highlight its destination prospect and potency, attracting its customers to visit Labuan Bajo. Promotion of Labuan Bajo also provides its consumers and tourists with information about BOPLBF and its programs to encourage and attract tourists. This promotion is vital to Labuan Bajo successful marketing as a super-priority

destination. Many channels are also needed as tools for promoting Labuan Bajo as a super-priority destination. The process of implementing the Labuan Bajo branding strategy as a super priority destination is related to important aspects of marketing communications to increase tourist interest and visits, as stated by the OECD in the OECD book *Tourism Trends and Policies* (2018). The Labuan Bajo Flores Tourism Authority Agency seeks to build the image of Labuan Bajo as a super priority or premium destination so that it will further increase tourists or visitors visiting Labuan Bajo by carrying out various ways in tourism marketing communications, including:

A. Tourism Marketing through Advertising

• Printed Materials Advertising

BOPLBF carried out the promotional activities by using printed promotional media in leaflets, posters, and banners. BOPLBF promoted Labuan Bajo tourism using printed media to promote the existing natural object potentials and make it easier for tourists to determine which objects they would like to visit. The use of printed promotional media is also carried out when BOPLBF holds certain events to introduce and highlight the tourism destinations in Labuan Bajo. They are used as supporting media when BOPLBF holds international, national, and regional tourism exhibitions.

• Social Media and Digital Media Advertising

Social media and digital platforms are forms of promotional media carried out by BOPLBF to introduce Labuan Bajo to its visitors. To reach the domestic and foreign tourists, BOPLBF uses YouTube (BOPLBF) (Facebook (BOP Labuan Bajo Flores)) and Instagram (@boplbf) to increase the tourists and potential tourists visiting decision to Labuan Bajo. The campaign is currently #rindulabuambajo intending to create a sense of nostalgia or the missing - Labuan Bajo feeling and attract the attention of the potential tourists to have a curiosity to visit Labuan Bajo. Social media and digital platforms for their campaign effectively connect directly with the target market and have engagement with their potential tourists.

Social media and digital media are used to share some information related to events or place destinations by creating various contents in every social media of Labuan Bajo tourism. Some digital posters and online articles are published. All links related to the information of Labuan Bajo tourism are listed in every existing content, so that all the people and users can directly connect to the main information.

B. Tourism Marketing through Direct Marketing

• Internet Marketing

Internet marketing is carried out through the official website to promote all tourism potential, accessed at labuanbajoflores.id. Through this website, BOPLBF wants to promote the tourism potential of Labuan Bajo and introduce it as a super-priority and premium class destination. Through labuanbajoflores.id website, BOPLBF also introduced their programs to develop Labuan Bajo destination as a super-priority destination. Through its official website, BOPLBF makes an effort to establish communication with its potential customers directly.

By using website as a form of media communication, BOPLBF create some contents, especially visual posters

related to Labuan Bajo destinations in order to provide actual information to the public and potential tourists.

C. Tourism Marketing through Personal Selling

Through personal selling, BOPLBF has direct communication with its potential tourists (person-to-person communication). The personal selling program emphasizes dyadic communication, which is reciprocal communication. This creates the possibility of designing a more specific and customized message, more personal communication, and the collection of direct feedback from potential tourists.

- **Familiarization Trip with Specifically Themed**

Tourism introduction for domestic tourists and foreign tourists.

- **International Exhibition (42nd International Fair of Tourism in Beograd, Serbia)**

This activity is a collaboration between the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia (KBRI) in Belgrade and BOPLBF. Labuan Bajo is the main focus of this exhibition because Labuan Bajo will be a venue for holding the G20 Conferences and ASEAN Conference. This event is one of the BOPLBF momentum to introduce tourism destination in East Nusa Tenggara Province.

- **NTT Tourism Industry Exhibition (World Travel Market 2019)**

The Regional Government of East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) & BOPLBF have made the World Travel Market as a mean to provide information and as a promotional event for Labuan Bajo and Flores tourism to the world. Komodo has become the primary branding for East Nusa Tenggara tourism at World Travel Market London 2019.

- **National Exhibition**

East Nusa Tenggara tourism industry exhibition was held in two cities, which were Jakarta and Surabaya. There were events in the exhibition to explain East Nusa Tenggara province's potential tourism and culture.

D. Tourism Marketing through Public Relations

Public relations is a communication link between BOPLBF and its external stakeholders who have the same interests. The goal is to build a positive image of Labuan Bajo as a super-priority destination. BOPLBF has carried out various ways in building the image of Labuan Bajo as a premium class destination in the minds of tourists and potential tourists by carrying out various activities; building relations with the media and external stakeholders; carrying out social activities that can lead the public opinion to have a positive impression of BOPLBF.

- Cooperation with East Nusa Tenggara Province Department of Tourism and Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia
- Cooperation with Local Stakeholders
- Integrated Tourism Master Plan (ITMP)

In collaboration with *Bappenas (Indonesian Ministry of National Development Planning)*, to make a big tourism development plan, not only for Labuan Bajo but also for tourism development in Flores and East Nusa Tenggara. The objective of this master plan is to develop sustainable tourism. The master plan was expected to follow the tourism trend and

show the uniqueness and existing market potentials, both domestic and international. East Nusa Tenggara was hoping to become a world-class dream destination. Sustainable tourism could bring positive impacts on society. Thus, the development of a super-priority destination or super-premium destination and the creative economy in Labuan Bajo must be a community-based program.

- **Travel Pattern**

The concept of structuring tourist travel flow or travel pattern is implemented in Labuan Bajo. The arrangement is to manage the tourists, not to accumulate in one particular destination. The travel pattern becomes a solution to managing tourists' distribution, including increasing their length of stay in Labuan Bajo. It is hoped that there will be more choices of attractions in Labuan Bajo that show the attractiveness of the culture and the people. History, culture, and community activities are explored to become tourists' products and travel patterns that provide quality tours for tourists who come to visit. In the future, Labuan Bajo will be a complete destination as it does not only provide natural beauty but also brings friendliness and community interaction within the city.

From many implementations that have been carried out, the use of digital tools is mostly done to reach the target market which is the potential tourists. Internet and technology are used to communicate and convey all the information about Labuan Bajo tourism. Digitalization and internet helping the process of implementation programs easier, especially when BOPLBF running various tourism campaigns on digital media and social media that related to Labuan Bajo as super-priority destination. Then, internet and social media empowered the potential tourists to produce and consume the information that enhancing their engagement with Labuan Bajo [39]. It also increasing the trust and loyalty of the tourist.

The new developments of technology and globalization create a new perspective in marketing communication [40]. Online platforms enabled the interaction between BOPLBF and its customer, which are the tourists and potential tourists. BOPLBF allowing them to share their opinions, experiences, and ideas regarding to the Labuan Bajo tourism in real time and empowering them to play a proactive role in all marketing functions that BOPLBF has done. The online based communication channels such as internet, digital media, and social media put the customers in the center and turned the customers to become more proactive to the information, news, and ideas that they received.

VI. CONCLUSION

Tourism is a portrait that can describe Indonesia's face to the world; if its potentials' strength can be appropriately managed. Tourism is the most essential economic sector in Indonesia. Seeing the trends in tourism growth, the tourism industry takes a strategic approach to plan and build a tourism destination to increase the tourist visits. With a good management, tourism plays an essential role in empowering various resources and creating sustainable tourism.

To increase the number of tourist visits, especially for foreign tourists, *Badan Otorita Pariwisata Labuan Bajo Flores* (BOPLBF) made Labuan Bajo a gateway for tourism in Flores island. Several potentials that can be taken as tourist attractions in Labuan Bajo. The government has developed Labuan Bajo

for a creative economy in East Nusa Tenggara. One of the efforts made was to design all the local products so the creative economy in Flores island will become the identity of tourism destination in Labuan Bajo.

The main goal of creating Labuan Bajo as a super-priority destination is to benefit Indonesia from having a source of foreign exchange income for the country due to the number of foreign tourist visits. The President of the Republic of Indonesia has appointed Labuan Bajo to become a super-priority destination where it provides service excellence, offers unique tourist experiences, and excellent amenities and infrastructure. The aim is to develop the Indonesian economy and the tourism sector while overcoming poverty in that area. BOPLBF hoped to accelerate the tourism development for Labuan Bajo as super-priority destination, serving premium and quality experiences to the tourists according to the 3A concepts: attraction, amenities, and accessibility.

Cooperation with local stakeholders, East Nusa Tenggara Province Department of Tourism, central government, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia become a supporting factor in implementing several activities that carried out by BOPLBF through Labuan Bajo place branding as a super-priority destination in Indonesia. The previous place branding, Enchanting Labuan Bajo, can be combined with the super-priority destination that is currently held by Labuan Bajo. Enchanting Labuan Bajo place branding is a support base for branding Labuan Bajo as a super-priority destination. Those brandings will generate a strong positive image in the minds of tourists and public if both can be promoted well.

The position of Labuan Bajo is a starting point to visit the National Park of Komodo so that it can expose the National Park of Komodo as one of its main attractions. *Badan Otorita Pariwisata Labuan Bajo Flores* (BOPLBF) implemented tourism marketing with several activities as a form of Labuan Bajo place branding application as super-priority destination. BOPLBF uses many ways to increase Labuan Bajo's image and brand awareness. By carrying out various communication types in implementing the Labuan Bajo tourism marketing, BOPLBF aims to identify its target market. The promotion uses communication instruments for their marketing communication. BOPLBF carried out their promotion in various media and communication, including online and offline media channels, to highlight the destination prospect and potency to attract their customers to come and visit Labuan Bajo.

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