

ASSESSING SERVICE QUALITY AND TOURIST SATISFACTION IN LABUAN BAJO TOURISM

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis implementasi quality tourism serta hubungannya dengan kepuasan wisatawan pada destinasi berkembang, dengan fokus pada pariwisata di Labuan Bajo, Indonesia. Sebagai destinasi yang berkembang pesat, Labuan Bajo telah diposisikan sebagai kawasan strategis yang mengintegrasikan daya tarik alam, infrastruktur pariwisata, serta pengembangan berbasis keberlanjutan. Namun demikian, bukti empiris mengenai bagaimana quality tourism dipersepsikan oleh wisatawan di destinasi berkembang masih relatif terbatas. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif deskriptif dengan instrumen kuesioner terstruktur menggunakan skala Likert lima poin. Jumlah responden sebanyak 200 orang yang merepresentasikan berbagai unsur pentahelix, yaitu wisatawan, pemerintah, pelaku usaha, akademisi, dan media. Analisis dilakukan terhadap beberapa dimensi utama quality tourism, meliputi daya tarik wisata, aktivitas, amenitas, aksesibilitas, keberlanjutan, kondisi lingkungan, pemasaran, pelayanan, keselamatan dan kesehatan kerja, serta pengalaman wisata secara keseluruhan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tingkat kepuasan wisatawan secara keseluruhan berada pada kategori sangat tinggi dengan nilai rata-rata sebesar 4,41. Daya tarik alam dan kualitas pelayanan menjadi kekuatan utama destinasi. Namun demikian, beberapa aspek masih memerlukan perhatian, antara lain keragaman aktivitas wisata, fasilitas pendukung, aksesibilitas bagi kelompok rentan, serta keterlibatan masyarakat lokal. Temuan ini mengindikasikan bahwa pariwisata di Labuan Bajo telah mampu memberikan pengalaman wisata yang positif. Meskipun demikian, diperlukan upaya lanjutan untuk meningkatkan aspek inklusivitas dan keberlanjutan jangka panjang. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi empiris terhadap kajian quality tourism di destinasi berkembang serta implikasi praktis bagi pengelola destinasi dan pembuat kebijakan dalam meningkatkan kualitas dan daya saing pariwisata.

Kata Kunci: *Pariwisata berkualitas; kepuasan wisatawan; destinasi berkembang; pariwisata berkelanjutan.*

ABSTRACT

This study examines the implementation of quality tourism and its relationship with tourist satisfaction in an emerging destination, focusing on tourism in Labuan Bajo, Indonesia. As a rapidly developing tourism destination, Labuan Bajo has been positioned as a strategic area that integrates natural attractions, tourism infrastructure, and sustainability-oriented development. However, empirical evidence on how quality tourism is perceived by visitors in emerging destinations remains limited. A quantitative descriptive approach was employed using a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale. The study involved 200 respondents representing various stakeholders, including tourists, government, business actors, academics, and media. The analysis covered key dimensions of quality tourism, namely attractions, activities, amenities, accessibility, sustainability, environmental conditions, marketing, services, occupational health and safety, and overall tourist experience. The findings reveal that overall tourist satisfaction is categorized as very high, with an average score of 4.41. Natural attractions and service quality are identified as the main strengths of the destination. However, several aspects, including activity diversity, supporting facilities, accessibility for vulnerable groups, and community involvement, still require improvement. These results indicate that while Labuan Bajo has successfully delivered a positive tourism experience, further efforts are needed to enhance inclusiveness and long-term sustainability. This study provides empirical insights into quality tourism in emerging destinations and offers practical implications for destination managers and policymakers in improving tourism quality and competitiveness.

Keywords: Quality tourism; tourist satisfaction; emerging destination; sustainable tourism.

INTRODUCTION

The development of tourism in Labuan Bajo has shown a gradual increasing trend in recent years, although it has not yet reached a consistently high growth level. This condition reflects the early stage of destination strengthening as a national priority area and highlights the need for destination management that focuses not only on the quantity of tourist arrivals but also on the quality of tourist experiences and sustainability. In this context, the concept of quality tourism emphasizes the integration of service quality, tourist experience, and environmental and social sustainability (UNWTO, 2018; OECD, 2020).

Conceptually, quality tourism can be operationalized through key dimensions such as attractions, activities, amenities, accessibility, sustainability, environmental conditions, marketing, services, occupational health and safety, and overall tourist experience. These dimensions contribute to tourist satisfaction, which reflects the gap between expectations and actual experiences (Chen & Chen, 2010). Previous studies have shown that service quality and experience significantly influence satisfaction and post-visit behavior, including revisit intention and recommendation (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Chi & Qu, 2008).

Tourism in Labuan Bajo represents an emerging destination characterized by increasing visitor flows, ongoing infrastructure development, and evolving destination management. These characteristics make it a relevant context for examining the implementation of quality tourism, particularly in assessing the alignment between destination development and tourist experience.

Although studies on tourist satisfaction are extensive, most treat tourists as a homogeneous group. In practice, visitors come from diverse backgrounds, including government, business actors, academics, media, and general tourists, who all experience the destination as consumers. Differences in background may influence expectations and perceptions of quality; however, studies incorporating this heterogeneous visitor composition remain limited. In addition, previous research often evaluates satisfaction partially without integrating the full dimensions of quality tourism.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the implementation of quality tourism and tourist satisfaction in tourism in Labuan Bajo by considering diverse visitor backgrounds. The findings are expected to provide empirical insights for improving destination quality in emerging tourism areas.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of *quality tourism* has emerged as a response to the shift in tourism development from a quantity-oriented approach toward enhancing tourist experience and destination sustainability. In this perspective, destination quality is not solely measured by the number of tourist arrivals, but by its ability to provide safe, comfortable, valuable, and sustainable experiences (UNWTO, 2018; OECD, 2020; Liburd & Edwards, 2010). The literature highlights that *quality tourism* is a multidimensional construct encompassing key destination attributes such as attractions, activities, amenities, accessibility, environmental conditions, marketing, services, and safety, which collectively shape the overall tourist experience (Buhalis, 2000; Middleton & Clarke, 2001).

Tourist satisfaction plays a central role in evaluating the quality of tourism experiences. It is defined as a post-visit evaluation reflecting the gap between tourists' expectations and their actual experiences (Chen & Chen, 2010; Oliver, 1997). Previous studies have consistently shown that service quality and experience significantly influence satisfaction, which in turn affects behavioral intentions such as revisit intention and word-of-mouth recommendations (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Chi & Qu, 2008; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Therefore, tourist satisfaction can be positioned as a key outcome of *quality tourism* implementation.

Furthermore, destination quality is shaped by both core and supporting attributes. Core attributes include primary attractions such as natural landscapes, while supporting attributes consist of facilities, accessibility, services, information, and environmental conditions (Gunn, 1994; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993). Empirical studies indicate that the overall tourist experience depends on the consistency of these attributes, as imbalances among them may influence tourists' overall perception of the destination (Prayag, 2009; Kozak & Rimmington, 2000).

Most previous studies treat tourists as a homogeneous group. However, in practice, visitors come from diverse backgrounds, including government, business,

academia, media, and general tourists, who visit destinations for various purposes such as leisure, MICE activities, and institutional engagements. These groups represent elements of the pentahelix; however, when visiting a destination, they act as consumers of tourism products and services (Carayannis & Campbell, 2009; Calzada, 2020). Differences in visitor backgrounds may lead to variations in expectations, evaluation standards, and perceptions of destination quality.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a quantitative approach using a descriptive research design to examine the implementation of quality tourism and its relationship with tourist satisfaction in tourism in Labuan Bajo, Indonesia. The study focuses on measuring tourists' perceptions of various dimensions of quality tourism and evaluating their overall satisfaction with the destination.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire was designed to capture key dimensions of quality tourism, including attractions, activities, amenities, accessibility, marketing, services, and overall tourist experience (ITDC, 2025). Tourist satisfaction was measured as an evaluative outcome variable reflecting respondents' overall experience at the destination.

The population of this study consists of visitors who have experienced tourism activities in Labuan Bajo. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select respondents who had directly visited and experienced the destination. The sample around 200 respondents representing diverse visitor backgrounds, including general tourists, government officials, business actors, academics, and media. Although these groups reflect elements of the pentahelix, they are treated as consumers in this study, as all respondents evaluated the destination based on their direct experience.

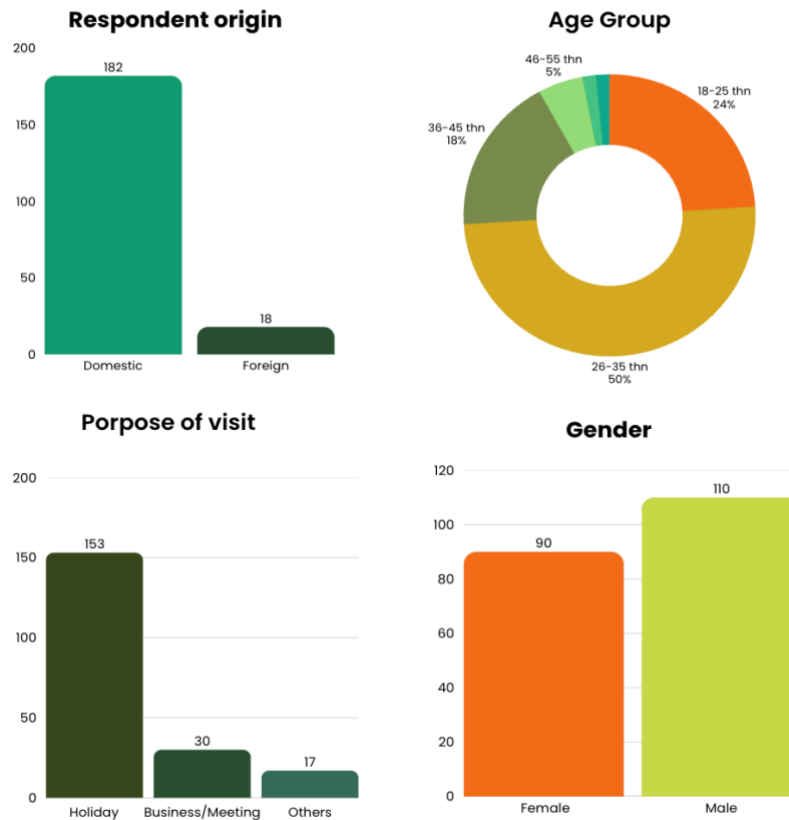
Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistical analysis to determine the level of perceived quality tourism and tourist satisfaction. Mean scores were calculated for each dimension, and the results were categorized into interpretation levels (e.g., low, moderate, high, very high) to facilitate analysis. This approach allows for identifying strengths and weaknesses across different dimensions of destination quality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive

The survey results indicate that visitors to the Labuan Bajo are predominantly domestic, accounting for the vast majority of respondents (91%), while international visitors represent a relatively small share (9%). Domestic tourists are largely concentrated from Labuan Bajo and Jakarta, whereas international visitors come from a diverse range of countries, particularly Malaysia, the United States, and France, reflecting the destination's growing international appeal. The gender distribution is relatively balanced, with a slight predominance of male visitors (55%). Meanwhile, the age profile is dominated by individuals in their productive years, especially those aged 25–35 (50%), followed by younger

visitors aged 18–25. This indicates that the destination is particularly attractive to young and active travelers.

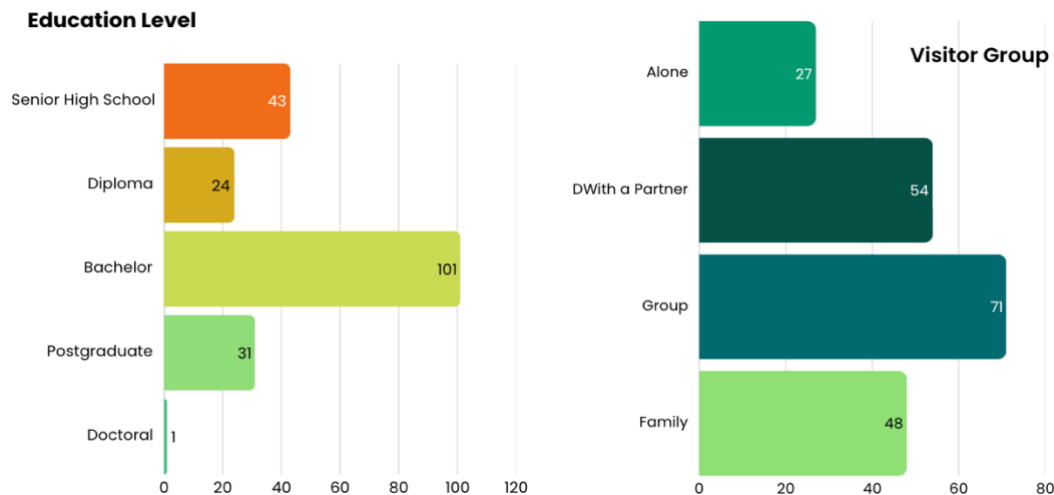


Picture 1. Profil Respondent
 Sources : Primary data (2026)

Regarding the purpose of visit, leisure is the main motivation, accounting for 76.6% of visits, while business-related purposes contribute a smaller share (15%), along with other purposes such as events. Overall, these findings suggest that Labuan Bajo attracts a predominantly domestic, (young), and well-educated visitor profile, with leisure as the primary travel motivation, while also showing potential for business and event-based tourism.

In terms of educational background, most respondents have relatively high levels of education, with over half holding a Bachelor's degree (50.5%), followed by smaller proportions of postgraduate and diploma holders. This profile suggests that the destination attracts a well-educated segment, supporting the development of quality tourism. Based on the customer satisfaction survey at Labuan Bajo, the distribution of visitor group types reveals that group visits are the most common, representing 35.5% of respondents. Visits with partners follow at 27%, while family visits account for 24%, and solo travelers make up the smallest proportion at 13.5%. This pattern suggests that the destination is particularly attractive for social and shared experiences, with the majority of visitors preferring to explore the area in groups or with companions.

The survey results indicate that Labuan bajo successfully attracts both first-time visitors, who make up the majority, and a notable portion of returning tourists, reflecting the destination's appeal and capacity to deliver positive experiences.



Picture 2. Education & Visitor group
Sources : Primer data

Labuan bajo area is characterized by its natural landscapes, iconic attractions, and light activities suitable for both special interest and leisure tourism. Watching the sunset or sunrise is the most popular activity, attracting 37% of visitors, highlighting the area's appeal for its scenic views. These findings suggest that while the natural environment remains the primary attraction, well-designed infrastructure and iconic landmarks enhance the overall visitor experience.

The results of the analysis indicate that all variables demonstrate a high level of customer satisfaction, with an overall average score of 4.41, suggesting that Labuan Bajo performs well across key tourism dimensions. This finding indicates that the destination has been able to deliver a positive and consistent tourism experience for visitors.

Among the variables, tourism services recorded the highest average score (4.56), followed by tourism marketing (4.50) and tourist attractions (4.45). This indicates that Labuan Bajo's main strengths lie in service quality, promotional effectiveness, and the attractiveness of its natural resources. Meanwhile, accessibility (4.25) and amenities (4.28) show slightly lower performance, suggesting that supporting infrastructure still requires improvement.

At the indicator level, the highest scores were found in staff providing fair service without discrimination (4.72) and access roads within the city (4.71). This highlights that service quality and internal accessibility are key competitive advantages of the destination.

In terms of tourist attractions, the high scores for quality of tourist attractions (4.61) and popularity (4.55), along with beauty (4.50), emphasize the strong natural appeal of the destination. This indicates a comparative advantage based on natural attractions, supporting the argument that destination attractiveness

is a primary determinant of tourist satisfaction (Stylos et al., 2016). However, the relatively lower score for availability of information at tourist attractions (4.21) suggests that the destination has not fully optimized its communication strategy, particularly in the digital context, where information accessibility plays a crucial role (Leung et al., 2015).

Tabel 1. Score Average Customer Satisfaction

Variables	Indicator	Average score
Tourist Attractions	Uniqueness of tourist attractions	4,42
	Beauty of tourist attractions	4,50
	Diversity of tourist attractions	4,38
	Quality of tourist attractions	4,61
	Popularity of tourist attractions	4,55
	Availability of information at tourist attractions	4,21
	Average Tourist Attraction Score	4,45
Amenities	Availability of restaurants	4,63
	Availability of shopping facilities	4,01
	Availability of information centers	4,48
	Availability of supporting facilities (money changers, ATMs, etc.)	4,00
	Average Amenities Score	4,28
Accessibility	Access roads	4,32
	Variety of transportation modes	4,45
	Public transportation services	3,87
	Access roads within the city	4,71
	Pedestrian areas	4,11
	Accessibility of information and communication (Internet, Wi-Fi)	4,12
	Accessibility for elderly and disabled persons	4,20
	Average Accessibility Score	4,25
Tourism Services	Staff friendliness	4,65
	Staff competence	4,51
	Staff responsiveness	4,46
	Staff honesty	4,49
	Staff politeness	4,52
	Staff provide fair service without discrimination	4,72
	Average Tourism Service Score	4,56
Tourism Marketing	Effectiveness of promotion in attracting tourist interest	4,45
	Price of tourism services relative to quality	4,42
	The Golo Mori's image as attractive and worth visiting	4,57
	Ease of obtaining information about The Golo Mori	4,55
	Average Tourism Marketing Score	4,50
Overall Average of Variables		4,41

The strong performance in tourism services (4.56) highlights the importance of human resources in delivering a high-quality tourism experience. Indicators such as staff friendliness (4.65), politeness (4.52), and competence (4.51) show consistently high values, reinforcing the role of service quality as a key component of tourism competitiveness.

Although tourism marketing shows a relatively high average score (4.50), slightly lower scores in price suitability relative to quality (4.42) and promotion effectiveness (4.45) indicate that there is still room to enhance destination visibility and perceived value. In the digital era, effective communication strategies and digital marketing play a crucial role in enhancing destination competitiveness (Xiang et al., 2017).

The relatively lower performance in amenities (4.28), particularly in supporting facilities such as money changers and ATMs (4.00) and shopping facilities (4.01), indicates that the development of supporting infrastructure is not

yet fully integrated. Similarly, in the accessibility dimension (4.25), lower scores in public transportation services (3.87) and accessibility for elderly and disabled visitors (4.20) highlight the need for more inclusive and efficient transport systems. Previous studies emphasize that accessibility and supporting facilities are critical factors in improving tourist experience and destination competitiveness (González-Rodríguez et al., 2019).

Overall, these findings indicate that Labuan Bajo has a strong foundation as a competitive tourism destination, particularly in terms of service quality, natural attractions, and marketing performance. However, to strengthen its long-term competitiveness, it is essential to improve supporting facilities, enhance information accessibility, and develop more inclusive infrastructure, particularly in transportation and accessibility for all visitor groups.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of quality tourism in Labuan Bajo has been generally successful, as reflected in the high level of tourist satisfaction, with an overall average score of 4.41. These results indicate that the destination has been able to deliver a positive and consistent tourism experience, in line with the principles of quality tourism that emphasize experience quality and sustainability.

The findings reveal that the main strengths of the destination lie in tourism services, tourist attractions, highlighting the importance of natural beauty, service quality, and promotion as key competitive advantages. These elements contribute significantly to shaping positive visitor perceptions and overall satisfaction.

However, several aspects still require improvement, particularly in terms of amenities, diversity of tourism activities, accessibility for specific groups, and supporting infrastructure. In addition, limitations in information availability and promotional effectiveness indicate that destination communication has not yet been fully optimized, especially in the digital context.

Overall, while Labuan Bajo has a strong foundation as a competitive and emerging tourism destination, further improvements are needed to enhance its inclusivity, integration, and long-term competitiveness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, several improvements are recommended to enhance the competitiveness of Labuan Bajo as a tourism destination. The destination should prioritize the diversification of tourism activities to enrich visitor experiences and encourage longer stays. In addition, improvements in supporting facilities and infrastructure, particularly public transportation, accessibility, and essential amenities, are necessary to ensure a more inclusive tourism environment. Strengthening digital communication and promotion is also important to improve destination visibility and accessibility of information. Furthermore, enhancing human resource capacity in terms of service quality and communication skills should be continuously pursued. Lastly, efforts to promote sustainable and community-based tourism need to be reinforced to ensure long-term development that is both competitive and environmentally responsible.

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