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# Blue Economy-Based City Branding Strategy for Coastal Tourism in 3T Areas (Disadvantaged, Frontier, and Outermost)

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## Abstract

Kupang Regency in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) is categorized as a 3T region (Disadvantaged, Frontier, and Outermost) with substantial coastal tourism potential to support sustainable regional development. This study examines the implementation of blue economy based coastal tourism city branding in Kupang Regency using Kavaratzis' (2004) city branding framework. The study employs a descriptive qualitative design, utilizing direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Data were collected through purposive sampling of ten key informants from relevant local government agencies, tourism related business actors, and community stakeholders.

Semi structured interviews were conducted to explore branding strategies and implementation practices, and the data were analyzed using thematic coding techniques. Data credibility was ensured through triangulation of sources and methods, as well as member checking, while ethical considerations were addressed through informed consent and confidentiality assurance.

The findings show that coastal tourism city branding in Kupang Regency is implemented through five interconnected stages: research, deliberation, consultation, action, and communication. The action stage is manifested in community-based ecotourism initiatives, infrastructure and accessibility improvements, and cross-sectoral stakeholder collaboration. These efforts align with the regional development vision of "Kupang Regency Towards Gold 2026" by integrating blue economy principles into coastal tourism development. This study contributes theoretically by contextualizing Kavaratzis' city branding framework within a coastal tourism setting in 3T regions and practically by offering policy-relevant insights for sustainable tourism branding in resource-constrained areas.

## KEYWORDS

city branding; tourism; coastal; blue economy.

## Introduction

East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) Province is one of Indonesia's eastern regions classified as a 3T area disadvantaged, frontier, and outermost characterized by geographical isolation, limited infrastructure, and uneven development outcomes (Eka et al., 2020). Despite these structural constraints, NTT possesses substantial marine and coastal resources that offer strong potential for tourism-led development. Strategically located in Southeast

Indonesia, the province comprises approximately 550 islands, with Flores, Sumba, and Timor as the three main inhabited islands. This archipelagic configuration positions NTT as a critical maritime gateway while simultaneously presenting governance and accessibility challenges that complicate regional development planning.

Kupang Regency, located on Timor Island and serving as one of the administrative regions of NTT, exemplifies these dual conditions of high tourism potential and persistent developmental constraints. As a regency categorized as disadvantaged, Kupang encompasses 24 sub-districts, 160 villages, and 17 urban wards, covering an area of more than 506,000 hectares and including 25 islands, only three of which are permanently inhabited (Richset Riwukore et al., 2021). The regency is endowed with diverse coastal attractions such as Tablolong Beach, Lasiana Beach, Oesapa Beach, Ketapang Beach, Manikin Beach, and several lesser-known coastal destinations, alongside inland attractions including waterfalls, lakes, and cultural landscapes. These assets reflect a multidimensional tourism portfolio that extends beyond beach tourism to include natural, cultural, and culinary experiences.

However, the presence of rich natural assets has not translated into optimal tourism performance. Kupang Regency continues to face persistent challenges that constrain the effective development of coastal tourism and limit its contribution to the regional economy. Key issues include inadequate road access to beach destinations, limited public transportation, insufficient basic facilities (such as shelters, sanitation, lighting, and lodging), weak waste management systems, and low levels of environmental awareness among local communities (Sanusi, 2024; Riwu et al., 2023; Saragi et al., 2024). These constraints undermine visitor experience, reduce destination competitiveness, and weaken the sustainability of coastal tourism development.

At the national level, Indonesia has actively promoted marine-based development through the adoption of the blue economy framework. The blue economy is embedded in long-term and medium-term development strategies, including the National Long-Term Development Plan (RPJPN) 2005–2025 and the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) 2020–2024, which emphasize the strategic role of maritime sectors in driving inclusive and sustainable economic growth (Haryana, 2022)(Nugroho, 2019). Conceptually, the blue economy advocates efficient resource utilization, environmental sustainability, and multi-sectoral value creation, generating multiple economic benefits while preserving marine ecosystems (Hidayat, 2022).

Despite strong policy endorsement, the implementation of blue economy principles in coastal tourism remains uneven, particularly in peripheral and frontier regions. Empirical studies highlight recurring implementation barriers, including environmentally insensitive coastal development, limited access infrastructure, increasing plastic waste, and insufficient public awareness of marine conservation (Goldberg et al., 2020; Karjoko et al., 2022; Nelson et al., 2019) (Sukuryadi et al., 2021). These challenges are particularly pronounced in 3T regions, where governance capacity, fiscal resources, and institutional coordination are often constrained. Nevertheless, the blue economy remains a critical development pathway, as coastal ecosystems function not only as economic assets but also as buffers against climate-related

hazards and environmental degradation (Rahman & Mawar, 2021).

The application of the blue economy concept (Adriadi et al., 2022) in coastal areas will provide additional points and influence national development if the government and community are committed to developing coastal areas creatively and innovatively. Coastal tourism in Kupang Regency is not yet widely known to tourists. Therefore, the government's role (Bere et al., n.d.) is needed to carry out more planned tourism marketing and development. The tourism sector makes a positive contribution to the development of small and medium-sized economies, creates jobs, improves the regional economy, promotes cultural heritage through customs, culinary delights, and beautiful natural tourism (Fudikoa; & Fudikoa, 2025). The government needs to pay more attention through policies in managing tourism so that it grows and develops, providing economic, cultural, social, and environmental benefits ((Jerobisonif, Mbake, Hendrik, Dahoklory, et al., 2023) with good and sustainable management to increase regional original income.

In this context, tourism especially coastal tourism represents a strategic sector capable of translating blue economy principles into tangible socio-economic benefits. When managed sustainably, tourism contributes to employment generation, MSME growth, cultural preservation, and regional income while incentivizing environmental stewardship (FUDIKOA, 2025; Jerobisonif, Mbake, Hendrik, & Dahoklory, 2023). However, tourism development does not occur automatically through asset availability alone. It requires deliberate governance, coordinated planning, and effective marketing strategies that can position destinations competitively in increasingly crowded tourism markets.

Marketing in tourism should be understood not merely as promotional activity, but as a strategic process of value creation, communication, and relationship-building between destinations and target markets. In contrast to earlier descriptive notions of marketing as travel activity, contemporary tourism marketing emphasizes destination positioning, experience design, and brand-based differentiation (Kotler & Keller, 2021). For regions such as Kupang Regency, where awareness among domestic and international tourists remains limited, strategic destination marketing becomes essential for overcoming peripheral status and structural disadvantages.

One increasingly prominent approach within tourism marketing is city branding. City branding (Adona et al., 2017; Fathinnah et al., 2022) refers to the strategic process by which cities and regions construct, communicate, and manage a distinctive identity grounded in their cultural, environmental, social, and economic attributes to influence perceptions among tourists, investors, and residents (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013; Lucarelli & Berg, 2011). Rather than functioning solely as a slogan or logo, city branding is a governance-driven process involving stakeholder participation, narrative construction, and long-term reputation management. Effective city branding typically encompasses attributes (distinctive characteristics), messages (coherent and memorable narratives), differentiation (unique positioning), and ambassadors (actors who embody and disseminate the brand) (Herget et al., 2015).

In tourism-oriented regions, city branding has been shown to enhance destination competitiveness, strengthen place identity, and stimulate economic activity through increased visitation and investment (Riza et al., 2012; Miller & Barbour, 2014). In Indonesia, several cities and regions have adopted branding strategies rooted in local wisdom and cultural identity to improve visibility and

attractiveness. However, much of the existing city branding literature focuses on metropolitan or well-developed urban contexts, where infrastructure readiness, institutional capacity, and market access are relatively strong.

This reveals a critical research gap. While studies on city branding and tourism development are extensive, there remains limited empirical understanding of how city branding processes operate in disadvantaged, frontier, and outermost (3T) coastal regions, particularly when aligned with blue economy principles. Existing research often emphasizes branding outcomes such as image perception or tourist intention rather than examining the implementation processes, stakeholder coordination, and governance dynamics that shape branding effectiveness in resource-constrained contexts. Furthermore, applications of established city branding frameworks, such as the participatory place branding model proposed by Kavaratzis (2017), are rarely explored in peripheral coastal regions characterized by infrastructural deficits, environmental vulnerability, and community-based livelihoods.

Kupang Regency provides a compelling empirical setting to address this gap. As a coastal 3T region with abundant marine resources but limited tourism visibility, the regency illustrates the tensions between development aspirations and structural constraints. Field observations reveal that access to major beaches such as Tablong remains difficult due to poor road conditions, absence of pedestrian infrastructure, limited public transport, and lack of visitor information centers. Facilities such as shelters, sanitation, lodging, and culinary services are unevenly distributed and often underdeveloped. Environmental challenges, including scattered waste and low community awareness of coastal conservation, further undermine destination quality and sustainability. These conditions highlight the necessity of examining not only what branding strategies are adopted, but how they are implemented and experienced on the ground.

Against this backdrop, this study positions itself at the intersection of city branding, coastal tourism development, and blue economy implementation in a 3T context. The novelty of this research lies in its process-oriented analysis of coastal tourism city branding in a disadvantaged and frontier region, using the participatory place branding framework to map sequential stages of branding implementation and stakeholder involvement. Unlike prior studies that focus primarily on branding perceptions or promotional outputs, this research emphasizes governance processes, inter-agency coordination, community participation, and the integration of blue economy principles into branding practices.

By doing so, the study contributes to the literature in three ways. First, it extends city branding theory to underexplored peripheral and coastal contexts, demonstrating how branding processes are shaped by infrastructural, institutional, and environmental constraints. Second, it empirically links city branding with blue economy practices, moving beyond policy rhetoric to examine how sustainability principles are operationalized within tourism branding strategies. Third, it provides context-specific insights for policymakers and practitioners seeking to design inclusive and sustainable tourism branding in 3T regions.

Accordingly, the central research question guiding this study is: How is coastal tourism city branding based on blue economy principles implemented in a

disadvantaged, frontier, and outermost (3T) region such as Kupang Regency? By addressing this question, the study seeks to deepen understanding of place branding as a governance process and to inform more equitable and sustainable tourism development pathways in Indonesia's peripheral coastal regions.

## Methods

This study employs a descriptive qualitative design to examine the implementation of blue economy based coastal tourism city branding in a 3T (disadvantaged, frontier, and outermost) coastal context. This approach is appropriate for capturing stakeholder perspectives, implementation dynamics, and contextual conditions of city branding processes.

Data were collected through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Purposive sampling was used to select ten key informants from relevant local government agencies (Fisheries Service, Cooperative and MSME Service, and Bappeda), tourism managers, business actors, and local community representatives. Semi-structured interview guides were developed based on Kavaratzis, (2005) city branding framework, covering the stages of research, deliberation, consultation, action, and communication. Each interview lasted approximately 45–90 minutes and was conducted with prior consent. Observations focused on coastal tourism facilities, accessibility, environmental conditions, and branding-related practices, while documents included policy reports and planning materials.

Data were analyzed using thematic coding. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were systematically coded and categorized to identify recurring patterns and themes related to the city branding process and the integration of blue economy principles.

Credibility was ensured through source and method triangulation, as well as member checking with selected informants. Ethical procedures included informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality assurance. All data were anonymized and used solely for academic purposes.

## Result and Discussion

Kupang Regency is close to the city of Kupang, which is the capital of East Nusa Tenggara (Kupang City Regional Regulation Number 4 of 2019, n.d.). Kupang Regency has 26 natural attractions managed and developed by the local government as a tourism force in accordance with the Tourism Law No. 3 of 2009. Based on the 2019-2024 RPJMD and the 2019-2024b RPJMB amendments, there are problems in marine and fisheries: the lack of a percentage of fishing households that diversify their businesses (RTP), the lack of availability of fish auction sites, and the lack of an increase in total production of capture and aquaculture fisheries.

These documents identify Kupang Regency's coastal tourism assets alongside structural constraints in marine and fisheries development, such as limited diversification of fishing households, inadequate fish auction facilities, and stagnant capture and aquaculture production. Environmental carrying capacity analysis shows that most areas fall within low to medium categories for cultural ecosystem services (recreation and ecotourism), indicating

the need for controlled and sustainable tourism development.

Vision and mission of Kupang district (Teknokratik et al., 2025). The mission of Kupang Regency to Kupang Emas Regency. Meanwhile, the mission: 1). Increasing the availability of sustainable infrastructure to increase regional productivity based on the original potential of the region; 2). Improving the quality of human resources, technology utilization and regional innovation development; 3). Providing quality, fair, equitable and inclusive public services; 4). Realizing governance and transformation; 5). Improving the quality of adaptive, resilient and sustainable environmental management. Kupang Regency is heading to gold with 8 goals (goals), namely; a) Superior education; b). Quality health, c). bureaucratic reform and governance; d). downstream and industrialization based on local resources; e). sustainable and innovative economic empowerment; f). integrated poverty alleviation, g). food and water self-sufficiency.

Based on figure 1, the distribution of the carrying area of the environmental carrying capacity of cultural and recreational and ecotourism ecosystem services in Kupang Regency based on three proxies is classified into 3 (three) categories, namely the low category covering an area of 140,700.2 ha (27.64%), the medium category covering an area of 340,439.5 ha (66.88%), and the high category covering an area of 27,853.8 ha (5.47%), in the figure below.

Kupang Regency has diverse al., 2025a; Okyana et al., n.d.), there are five important things that underlie tourism activities: First, responsible tourism travel, meaning that all tourism actors must be responsible for the impact caused by tourism activities on the natural and cultural environment; Second, tourism activities are carried out to/in areas that are still natural (nature made) or in/to areas that are managed based on natural rules; Third, the goal is not only to enjoy the charm of nature, but also to gain additional knowledge and understanding of various natural and cultural phenomena; Fourth, providing support for nature conservation businesses; Fifth, improving the welfare of the local community. The charm of the beauty of coastal tourism can be seen from several beaches visited by researchers in Kupang Regency Government, (2025).

#### Batu Lesa Beach

Batu Lesa Beach is located in Lifuleo Village is famous for its hard waves and is included in the southern beach group. The beach is still natural, with a fairly long coastline from the right side of the road to directly enjoy the view of the sea. Batu Lesa Beach is divided into two parts, namely There is a part for the general public to be on the open beach while the other part is managed by local residents using tickets or entrance tickets to enjoy the beach. The beach which is managed by residents, has a large stone view on the edge of the beach on which there are 3 Crosses. Some parts of this beach are sandy and some are small rocks. As far as the eye can see, on the beach of Batu Lesa, there are no small traders who sell their various businesses, both in the form of culinary and just drinking to quench their thirst. The community is still focused on selling sand and gravel and becoming traditional fishermen.

#### Manikin Beach

Manikin Beach has different specialties from other beaches in Kupang Regency. The uniqueness of Manikin

beach is that when the sea water recedes on the beach, it is not the sand that is seen, but coral rocks mixed with agate chunks stretching along the coastline with a length of about three kilometers. Another uniqueness, the beach is overgrown with thorn trees so it is very suitable for shelter and enjoying the beach panorama. So that this beach is visited by many residents around the city and Kupang regency, because it is located not far from Kupang City. Especially in the afternoon or on vacation, many residents visit to enjoy the beach, take a bath or enjoy the sunset. On this beach there are also several lopo as shelter. Another beautiful scenery and often used as selfies and other necessities is many trees on the beach. Unlike Batu Lesa beach which is difficult for pedangang, on Manikin beach there are sellers who sell food, drinks and lait, especially on Sundays or holidays.

#### Salupu Beach

Salupu Beach not far from Batu Lesa beach has a uniqueness compared to other beaches, namely its blackish-brown sand and tourist attractions that are still virgin (original) and have not been touched by tourists. This brown and blackish sand can be seen when the sea water recedes. Salupu Beach can be accessed through Batu Lesa beach, which is located in Lifuleo Village. You can go through the direction of Kupang to Tablong. When passing 2 towers, turn right (Evacuation Path) straight until you find a branch right at Posyandu Tuadale, turn right-through the forest with rocky roads and white soil.

#### Tablong Beach

The beach, which is located in West Kupang District, has beautiful white sand and is approximately 30 km from Kupang City, but the road access to the location of this beach is in poor condition. Around the beach there are fishing and seaweed farming villages and temporary landing places for local fishermen. The coastal communities around Tablong Beach, in addition to working as fishermen, also earn income by selling merchandise at beach locations including; Grilled fish business, no stalls and food stalls. In the location of the marine tourist attraction there are 2 permanent traders who sell, there is 1 accommodation business owned by local residents who are temporarily under construction and 1 cottage owned by local residents who are married to foreigners of British nationality.

#### Oesina Beach

Oesina Beach has its own attraction with white sand and clear and calm sea water. Oesina Beach has not been visited by many tourists because of the road access is not so good. The name of Oesina Beach or Air Cina is actually Air Sina, the name given by the Rote people who inhabit this place. This beach is named Air Sina because in the past Portuguese traders used this place as a berth. This beach is also where fishermen and seaweed farmers depend for their livelihoods. The harvested seaweed is dried on top of the para-para on the beachside. The dried seaweed is then weighed. There is also a traditional salt business owned by local residents who use the shells produced and then marketed to local markets to increase household income. Oesina Beach can be reached about 1 hour from Kupang City, before Tablong beach. Right at the Nefo Elementary School branch, turn left, then take the road for about 30 minutes. This beach has not been managed as a tourist attraction so visitors or tourists must bring food and drinks.

City branding is a way to promote the uniqueness of a city through the positioning of a regional tourism service product to be known around the world (Mustari et al., 2021). The uneven rate of population distribution in Kupang Regency reflects a significant inequality between urban and

rural areas. The population in the East Kupang and Central Kupang Urban Areas reached 25.59% of the total population of 379,464 people in 2023. This condition shows that the population in Kupang Regency is more concentrated in more developed sub-districts, while many villages and remote areas in Kupang Regency are increasingly sparsely populated. Access to basic infrastructure such as roads, electricity, clean water, as well as health and education services is still limited, making it difficult for people in these areas to improve their quality of life. This inequality contributes to economic inequality, where more densely populated areas have more job opportunities and economic activity compared to less developed areas.

The results of the research findings are that there are several research locations in Kupang regency, not only beach tourism, there are also natural tourism, cultural arts tourism and culinary tourism that can help and encourage the city branding of tourism in Kupang regency to attract tourists to visit. Based on the findings of the research field, the implementation of the coastal Tourism City Branding strategy based on the blue economy in the Kupang Regency area which is included in the 3 T's (disadvantaged, frontier, outermost) area is as follows:

#### Research

At this stage, the observation of the potentials of coastal tourism based on the blue economy in Kupang district has a lot of potential but has not been optimally developed. There is still a lot of need for planning for safe, comfortable and friendly tourism development, both in terms of infrastructure, road access, and the addition of public facilities, which need to be handled seriously by involving various interests to increase regional income and the surrounding community. Coastal tourism potential is abundant but underdeveloped, indicating a gap between natural capital and sustainable planning capacity. This contrasts with prior city branding studies that emphasize destination readiness; here, branding precedes infrastructure maturity, marking a context-specific deviation.

#### Deliberation

The Kupang Regency Government has a plan to improve the community's economy and regional opinions are supported (*Perda Kota Kupang Nomor 4 Tahun 2019*, n.d.) in the vision of the realization of Kupang Regency towards gold 2026. The mission of Kupang Regency towards Kupang regency is golden. Meanwhile, the mission: 1). Increasing the availability of sustainable infrastructure to increase regional productivity based on the original potential of the region; 2). Improving the quality of human resources, technology utilization and regional innovation development; 3). Providing quality, fair, equitable and inclusive public services; 4). Realizing governance and transformation; 5). Improving the quality of adaptive, resilient and sustainable environmental management. Kupang Regent Yosep Lede and Deputy Regent of Kupang Aurum Titu Eki have a vision and mission towards Kupang Emas Regency in 2026 which will be achieved in 8 goals which are flagship programs to achieve the vision and mission, including: a) Superior education; b). Quality health, c). bureaucratic reform and governance; d). downstream and industrialization based on local resources; e). sustainable and innovative economic empowerment; f). integrated poverty alleviation, g). food and water self-sufficiency. Achieving the vision and mission of realizing [Kupang Regency towards gold in 2026](#) is good to focus on the development of coastal tourist destinations (beaches) that are so numerous, beautiful

and exotic to become the identity of [Kupang Regency towards gold in 2026](#). This must be accompanied by improving infrastructure and road access to beach locations, facilities and infrastructure, increasing human resources with the use of technology and developing regional innovations, one of which is providing training to business actors and fishermen in seaweed cultivation and providing training on the use of social media in marketing products (Prilenska, 2012). The vision and strategy launched by the Regent of Kupang Regency cannot run alone but will involve many parties, including stakeholders, investors, developers and infrastructure improvements. The government, in this case the Regent of Kupang Regency, together with stakeholders and related parties, especially communication consultants to brand Kupang Regency, began to make plans through Bappeda, marketing in collaboration with the Regional Investment Agency, promotion, target market, to implementation through events (PR) in a continuous and integrated manner. Synergy with various other agencies such as cooperative offices, fisheries and marine services, investors and local communities in particular and the wider community in general.

The Kupang district government strengthens synergy between related agencies such as the Regional Development Planning Agency which formulates planning strategies and builds urban infrastructure, improving, structuring and managing marine tourism, natural tourism, historical tourism, and cultural arts, culier, becoming the authority of the Culture and Tourism Office. The promotion and city branding (Amelinda et al., 2024; Satria & Fadillah, 2021) require the involvement of the communication and information transportation agency which will socialize to the public widely through various media, sustainable events so that the image of tourism is raised. The contribution of Coastal Tourism in Kupang Regency is expected to support the goal of blue economy development at the national level through the application of technology that can reduce negative impacts on the environment, as well as reduce waste in the use of marine products. During deliberation, the integration of tourism branding within the "Kupang Emas 2026" vision illustrates institutional commitment. However, blue economy principles become operational only when translated into measurable practices, such as seaweed-based livelihoods, MSME capacity building, and technology-supported marketing elements that distinguish this case from more symbolic branding models.

#### Consultation

The marine tourism infrastructure in Kupang district is very minimal, and there are beaches that are still far from adequate facilities and infrastructure, let alone comfortable and friendly. The involvement of local governments with stakeholders (Trueman & Cornelius, 2006) in developing marine tourism objects by improving access to beach locations, road directions, public toilets, resting or shelter places in the form of lopo, some are damaged and there are even beaches without lopo, scattered garbage and lack of lodging, places of worship, simple places to eat that are friendly and comfortable. The importance of comfort and ease of infrastructure as branding and gates spoils tourists with beautiful views of the beach and sea with the procurement and development of beach tourism. The consultation stage reveals that inadequate infrastructure, waste management, and visitor facilities undermine branding credibility, reinforcing evidence from Trueman & Cornelius (2006) that stakeholder engagement must be accompanied by material improvements.

#### Action

The Government together with stakeholders, investors and the community together realize the vision and mission that has been proclaimed through the stages of socialization, and continuous and continuous campaigns in realizing Kupang Regency towards Gold 2026. City appeals also need to pay attention to public spaces in marine tourist attractions such as art and cultural open parks that can be accessed by the general public as well as a place to channel the interests and talents of the community ranging from children to parents. This open space is present in marine tourist attractions, in addition to seeing the beautiful scenery of the sea coast you can also learn to preserve the local culture. In addition to the cultural park, reading rooms can be developed and other educational spaces. The provision of public cultural spaces and community managed facilities supports ecosystem-friendly tourism while strengthening social inclusion an applied form of sustainable livelihood development rarely detailed in existing branding literature.

#### Communication

The Kupang district government together with the communication office make effective communication plans and strategies in branding marine tourism, not just talk shows on media, radio or television but also to other media. Communication processes the dissemination of information from one person to another (Jonathan, 2012) through various existing media such as mass media, traditional media, social media (Holmes, n.d.; Indrawan, 2022; Summers, n.d.) and World of Mouth. The use of city branding using promotional media, the district government together with related agencies make marketing and product promotion planning, advertising, sales promotion and public relations an integral part as a tool to introduce or promote the city/region. Communication can be done in a multi-layered system, not only on the internet, but in various ways such as leaflets, audiovisuals, counseling (Saefudin, 2008), as well as collaborating with tourism service providers. In addition, the government needs to create a brand as a form of identity that is inherent in the minds of tourists as part of the city branding of Kupang Regency towards gold (Teknokratik et al., 2025). Finally, communication emerges as a multi layered strategy combining digital media, traditional channels, and community narratives, embedding environmental stewardship and local identity into destination imagery.

The Kupang Regency Government with a vision towards Kupang Regency towards Gold, as branding through marine tourism by involving various parties, not only the Kupang Regency Government as administrators, facilitators and service providers with other related agencies also builds cooperation, collaboration and synergy with all elements of society and investors (Missa et al., n.d.) as well as creative economy business actors.

One example is the involvement of local communities (Adriadi et al., 2022) that make a positive contribution to family income, namely on Maninkin beach. At Maninkin beach (Veronika Missa et al., n.d.), the community and youth manage Maninkin beach tourism, the tourism office facilitates supporting facilities and infrastructure such as comfortable lopo (shelter), parking lots, guard posts that are managed on a rotating basis (manikin). The involvement of the local community Together with the tourism office, it provides economic added value for the local community, the opening of jobs, the opening of small and medium businesses with the emergence of various businesses ranging from food stalls that sell agricultural products such as sweet corn, sweet potatoes, as well as fishermen's catches in the form of processed seaweed, dried and fresh fish which are presented as friends to

relieve fatigue enjoying the beauty of marine tourism. vehicle workshops, photo services, souvenir shops managed by local MSMEs. The involvement of the local community in marine tourism helps the community in economic well-being which will contribute to the increase in regional income as well.

The expected impact on NTT tourism (Richset Riwakore et al., 2021) includes economic improvement through local original income (PAD), job creation, increased foreign exchange, and private sector growth. In addition, there is also a positive impact on the preservation of local culture, improving the quality of services, and strengthening the destination brand through the development of tourism products and infrastructure. The main target is to increase the number of tourists, extend their average stay time, and increase regional income through tourist spending on accommodation, transportation, attractions, and other goods/services, in line with the sustainable development of tourism and providing benefits to local communities. The Kupang district government through related agencies, stakeholders and academics provide skills to business actors (Richset Riwakore et al., 2021) such as small and medium enterprises or creative economy to improve the quality skills of business actors ranging from marketing training, finance, packaging, financial management, social media to digital marketing so that business actors think creatively, productively, innovatively and motivate each other (Tourism & Tenggara, n.d.).

This study shows that in 3T coastal regions, city branding is not merely a promotional exercise but an adaptive governance process, where blue economy principles function as both branding content and development mechanism bridging sustainability discourse with place-based economic resilience.

## Conclusion

City branding aligned with Kupang Regency's "Towards Gold 2026" vision demonstrates strong potential but still requires more integrated planning, coordinated governance, and systematic implementation to ensure that branding benefits extend beyond government and private actors to local livelihoods. This study confirms that coastal tourism branding based on blue economy principles can stimulate regional development only when supported by equitable infrastructure provision, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and meaningful community participation.

However, community involvement particularly among MSMEs, fishermen, and creative economy actors engaged in seaweed processing, fisheries products, handicrafts, tourism services, and site management remains uneven and insufficiently institutionalized. Without stronger capacity-building and inclusive governance mechanisms, the economic spillovers of tourism risk remaining localized and unsustainable.

Based on the findings, three priority recommendations are proposed. First, infrastructure development should prioritize basic access, sanitation, waste management, and environmentally friendly facilities at coastal destinations. Second, a cross-sector governance mechanism integrating planning, tourism, fisheries, and communication agencies is needed to operationalize blue economy principles into measurable practices. Third, continuous community capacity-building programs should focus on digital marketing, sustainable livelihoods, and environmental stewardship.

This study is limited by its qualitative scope and

location-specific focus, which may restrict generalizability. Future evaluations of city branding effectiveness should employ longitudinal indicators such as tourist arrivals, length of stay, MSME growth, local employment, and environmental cleanliness metrics to assess sustainability outcomes over time.

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