

## Research Article

# The B-Fest Promotion Model by the Local Government During the Covid-19 Pandemic Recovery Period (A Case Study at an Annual Tourism Event in Banyuwangi District)

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## Abstract.

At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Asia Pacific region experienced a decline in tourist arrivals by 82% from January-October 2020. This problem caused event promotion space to decrease in various parts of the world. The Covid-19 pandemic in Banyuwangi was first confirmed on March 29, 2020. Banyuwangi was one of the areas that felt the impact of this crisis. This research aims to reveal the B-fest promotion model by the Banyuwangi District government during the recovery period from the Covid-19 pandemic. This research uses a case study method with a qualitative approach. Data collection uses in-depth interviews and market surveys. The market survey used 284 respondents from tourists and non-tourists who had seen promotions from B-Fest 2022. This research shows that local government policies in carrying out promotions for B-fest events support the economic recovery process. The interactional communication model is the promotion concept carried out by the local government. However, this promotion model shows the supporting and inhibiting aspects of the promotion model itself.

**Keywords:** festival, promotion, local government, tourism communication, Banyuwangi, pandemic recovery period

## 1. Introduction

The Asia and Pacific region experienced a decline in tourist arrivals of 82% from January to October 2020 [1]. Indonesia is one of the countries affected by this pandemic. According to the Central Statistics Agency, there was an increase of 1.84 percent compared to August 2019 regarding the open unemployment rate in Indonesia [2]. This fact is the primary basis for various regions in Indonesia to execute ideas related to recovery during the pandemic. The significant impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been proven to have medium and long-term consequences that still need to be faced, including in Indonesia. Especially in the implementation of festivals that support the

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tourism sector. In this case, one of Indonesia's regions with a regular schedule related to holding festivals is the Banyuwangi district.

Banyuwangi has enormous potential for natural, cultural, spiritual, and historical tourism. Banyuwangi received the Anugerah Wisata Nusantara Award in 2011 as the district with the best artificial tourist attraction and the regent who cares most about advancing regional tourism [3]. Local governments' role and support are needed for further improvements, including the festival. In 2022, Government will hold 99 B-Fest festivals, including the "festival Kebangsaan," which will be held on October 15, 2022 [3]. In practice, B-Fest is expected to be able to depict the image of Banyuwangi district. The cultural diversity in Banyuwangi area makes B-Fest have the potential to be a significant attraction in the future.

Festivals in other countries have their diversity in celebration. Identifying and discussing the various discourses of festival research made it possible to determine the role and impact of festivals in society and culture, the features of festival tourism, and festival management. Cultural capital was created through the National Arts Festival in South Africa [4]. Festivals are used as a tool for creating destination images, re-organization strategies, and branding. In Europe, the St Valentine's Fair festival also influenced changes in the image of the city of Leeds [5]. This shows that every region in every part of the world has festivals as a tool to empower culture to become marketing capital to attract tourists. Festivals are a means of tourism, economic development, and local marketing [6]. The statement is based on a consumer behavior approach and ignores the basic need for celebration. Then there are many social and cultural reasons for looking for holidays. In its development, festivals are increasingly being used to achieve social and cultural objects, which places them as an implementation for social marketers [6]. This theory explains that not only cultural aspects are the primary consideration in holding a festival, but also economic, social, and other aspects.

B-Fest is part of an ongoing program that will continue during the pandemic recovery period. During the pre-pandemic period, the Ministry of Tourism's promotional efforts were carried out by inviting 18 journalists from Japan to cover various tourism commodities, including B-Fest [7]. B-Fest, which consists of various cultural events, has become one of the most popular events in the country and is promoted internationally [8]. The event itself is a product offered with the hope that many people will visit the activities being held [9]. B-Fest is a type of event that promotes regional identity, namely the Hallmark event. A hallmark event is an event that is held repeatedly with a limited duration and is developed to increase awareness, attractiveness, and profits of a tourism

destination in the short or long term [10]. Where the promotion used is about more than just regional business profits. In line with the concept of the festival itself, researchers are trying to explore the promotion model for the B-fest event by the Banyuwangi District government during the Covid-19 pandemic recovery period.

## 2. Methods

This research uses a case study method with a qualitative approach. Case studies can be carried out for various purposes, such as describing a phenomenon, testing a theory, or generating a theory [11]. The qualitative approach is observing people in the environment, interacting with them, and interpreting their opinions about the world around them [12]. This research intends to explore the B-Fest 2022 promotion model by the local government during the pandemic recovery period. Primary data was obtained from forum group discussion with relevant parties from the local government related to B-Fest 2022.

Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from a survey of B-Fest 2022 visitors and literature studies. In qualitative analysis, researchers classify selected data into manageable units, synthesize them, develop patterns, find essential and learned information, and determine results that can be shared with others [13]. Quantitative data was obtained through market surveys. This analysis uses perspective reasoning from visitors who attended B-Fest 2022. The number of respondents used in this research was 284 respondents. Constructively, the analysis stage is related to the B-Fest management model by the local government of Banyuwangi during the pandemic recovery period. Go to several stages. The stages in question are (1) data reduction, (2) categorization, (3) data presentation, and (4) drawing conclusions [14,15]. Conclusions from qualitative and quantitative data produce conclusions regarding the promotion model for B-Fest 2022 during the pandemic recovery.

## 3. Results and Discussion

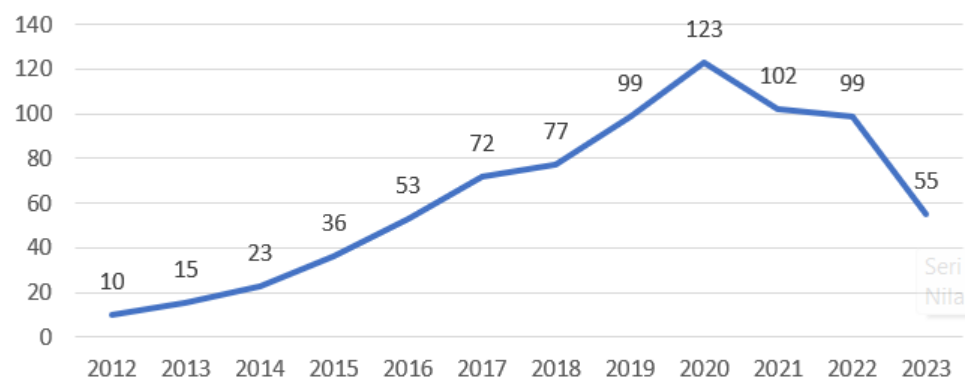
### 3.1. B-Fest Banyuwangi 2022 during the pandemic recovery period

B-Fest is a tourism event attraction that has various series of events. The series of events include arts and culture activities, sports, traditions, natural tourism, etc. B-Fest 2022

is in line with the branding launched by the Banyuwangi District government, namely, Banyuwangi Rebound. Banyuwangi Rebound itself is built on three main pillars, namely,

- (1) Handling the pandemic from a health perspective;
- (2) Economic recovery through programs to improve the people's economy And
- (3) Building harmony by strengthening social solidarity.

The existence of a program in the Banyuwangi Rebound movement also supports the existence of B-Fest activities in 2022. This program aligns with the Banyuwangi government's agenda during the recovery period from the Covid-19 pandemic.



**Figure 1:** Number of sub-events in organizing B-Fest per year (2012 – 2023).

The implementation of B-Fest from 2012 shows a stable increase until 2020. Based on Figure 1. There is a graph that decreases the number of events held by B-Fest. The Covid-19 pandemic has been one of the main factors causing this decline. This was because the territorial restrictions implemented by the Indonesian government created a prolonged crisis at that time. Of course, the 123 activities planned by the government in 2020 have been replaced with more realistic local government programs.

In the third quarter of 2020, the Banyuwangi District Government presented the “staycation” concept. This concept was carried out before the execution of the “Banyuwangi rebound” program. The “staycation” concept of providing accommodation packages and involving art performances has been offered at several hotels in Banyuwangi since August 2020 [16]. This is done so local communities and industry can continue their activities amidst Indonesia's territorial restrictions. However, the government decided to implement the Emergency Community Activity Restrictions (PPKM) policy from July 3 to July 20, 2021, specifically for areas on the islands of Java and Bali [17]. Then, it continued with the PPKM policy outside Java and Bali, effective from 9 to November 22, 2021 [18]. This is what makes the government need to consider implementing the festival in the Banyuwangi area.

According to Mr. Rofiq, as head of marketing for Banyuwangi District, planning for B-Fest 2022 was carried out a year before its implementation. B-Fest 2022 includes several types of attractions related to the tourism potential of Banyuwangi district. The following is a series of B-Fest 2022 events, which will be held from January to December 2022 (see Figure 2).



Figure 2: List of events in B-Fest 2022.

From 99 events being held, 51 will be held in the second semester of 2022. One of the government's main activities is the Banyuwangi Ethno Carnival (BEC) Reborn. This event was a turning point in the excitement of the ethnic fashion parade event in Banyuwangi after two years of being abolished due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The theme for the 2022 BEC is "The Diversity of Banyuwangi Culture." This theme highlights the ethnic and cultural diversity of the Banyuwangi community, which consists of the Osing, Javanese, Balinese, Madurese, Mandar, and Arab tribes. In other terms it can be called Tamansarine Nusantara. According to Ipuk Fiestiandi as Regent of Banyuwangi,

“So, Tamansarine Nusantara is a wealth in Banyuwangi. Banyuwangi has ethnic and cultural diversity. So this is our capital to build Banyuwangi together” [19]

Implementing BEC Reborn in 2023 became one of the primary triggers for the government to carry out this event again in 2023. In 2023, BEC raised the theme “The Magic of Ijen Geopark.” The theme “The Magic of Ijen Geopark” highlighted the success of Ijen Geopark as part of the world geopark network by the UNESCO Global Geopark (UGG) Executive Board in Paris, France, on May 24. The example of one of the ongoing events at the B-Fest event shows that the pandemic as a crisis period is not only an obstacle to tourism activities. The enthusiasm for the “Banyuwangi Reborn” branding implemented in 2022 will significantly impact the surrounding community. The BEC event, which had previously been on hiatus for two years, was held again by bringing local wisdom. The successful implementation in 2022 has prompted the government to hold a similar event with a different theme. Sustainable events like BEC in B-Fest 2022 encourage local governments and the community to innovate annually regarding the B-fest implementation model.

“all festivals should adopt basic marketing strategies, namely constant improvement through the fostering of creativity and innovation, customer research, and the pursuit of both loyal and new audience segments” [20].

Based on this, every B-fest event activity is expected to have various sustainable events every year. This is in continuity with Wohfeil and Whelan’s statement in [21] namely, event marketing as interactive hyperrealities concerning the brand where consumers are actively involved at the behavioral level, possibly leading to an emotional link with the brand. Therefore, deepening the local government’s promotion model as the B-fest organizer is necessary.

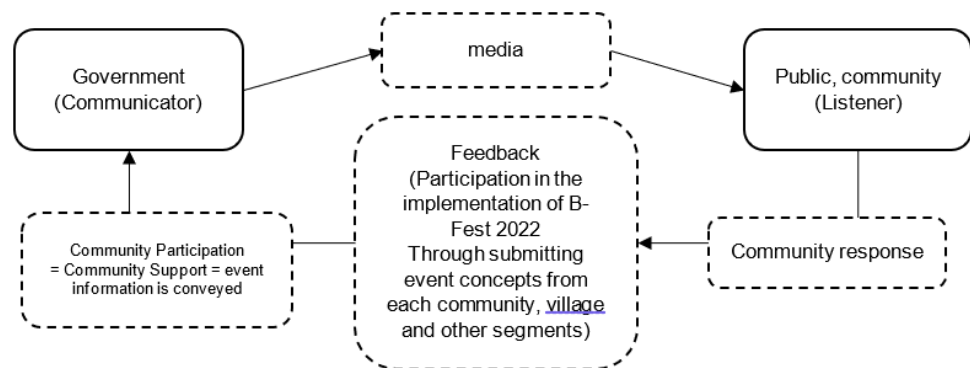
### **3.2. B-Fest Banyuwangi 2022 promotional model**

Based on the results of interviews with Mr. Ainur Rofiq as Head of the Marketing Division of the Banyuwangi District Tourism Office, the implementation of B-Fest 2022 has a main classification in planning each event, namely:

1. The events that will be proposed as part of the B-Fest implementation must have their uniqueness;
2. Events registered for B-Fest must have a social economic impact on the Banyuwangi community;

3. Events registered for B-Fest must involve the participation of the local community

Some of the points above are essential classifications in formulating the festival for the 99 types of events it contains. Each community in the Society is directed to compete in proposing events offered as part of B-Fest. This is because the local government must support community involvement. Indirectly, the local government has carried out promotions to the community. The community is involved in submitting events involving various community communities for B-Fest in 2022. This shows the communication process in promoting B-Fest a year before the festival starts. Interactional communication describes communication as a process where listeners provide feedback in response to the message the communicator conveys [22]. Communicants or local governments conduct screening or competitions for all levels of Society and communities who want to participate in B-Fest 2022. Then, listeners, the public, or communities respond by proposing various event concepts that convey culture related to the theme of B-Fest 2022.



**Figure 3:** B-Fest 2022 pre-planning promotional communication model.

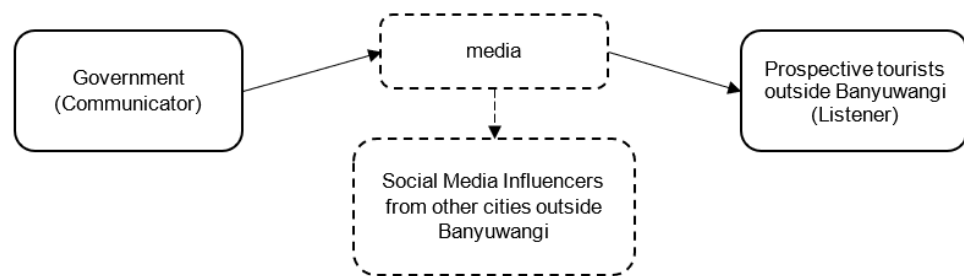
From Figure 3, it is explained that the B-Fest promotion process was indirectly carried out during the screening of events that would be held at B-Fest 2022. In the process, when B-Fest 2022 was formulated in 99 community activities, the local government implemented several promotion models. This uses various stakeholders who have connectivity in other cities and other institutions. The following is the promotional model:

Promotions carried out using various social media from local influencers in other cities. The targeted cities are various cities with direct public transportation routes to Banyuwangi. Trains are a mode of transportation that connects Banyuwangi with other cities. Such as Malang City, Jember, Surabaya, Bojonegoro, Ngawi, and so on. Promoted content is produced by content creators from Banyuwangi. So that every local influencer account in another city can upload this content as part of a promotion. One of the reasons for using social media influencers from other cities is the local Banyuwangi

influencer accounts, some of whose followers are Banyuwangi people. Thus, requiring such efforts from local governments.

Apart from using social media influencers from other cities, the local government uses connectivity with official institutions from other cities in promotions. One of the examples that was done is inviting 16 school principals to go on tours in Banyuwangi district. What is expected from a program like this is when the B-Fest process takes place during the school holidays. Where school principals can invite their students to visit the Banyuwangi district area for tourism.

Figure 4 shows several points related to the same interactional communication model used for the Community during B-Fest in the planning phase. However, this post-planning model stage focuses on the local government and other stakeholders outside the city as listeners of information related to B-Fest 2022.



**Figure 4:** Promotional communication model for the implementation of B-Fest 2022.

Based on the interview results, one of the events focused on attracting foreign tourists is BEC. This can be seen from the content used as a promotional tool for B-Fest 2022, which focuses on implementing BEC with the theme “The diversity of Banyuwangi Culture.” From the number of visitors who attended, Mr. Ainun Rofiq, Head of Marketing for the Banyuwangi District Tourism Office, showed that there were 80,000 to 90,000 visitors. However, there is no definite calculation regarding visitors for BEC or B-Fest 2022.

This research attempts to reveal the accuracy of the targets of the promotional model for B-Fest 2022. Researchers try to look at the perspective of visitors who have known information regarding promotions from B-Fest 2022. Based on market surveys related to promotions from B-Fest 2022, several important data emerge with promotions carried out by the local government. Of the 284 people who were given a questionnaire regarding the organization of B-Fest, 32.7% (93 people) did not attend any B-Fest 2022 events. Of the 95 people, there was a related perception that 56.9% (53 people) tended to agree that the promotion of B-Fest 2022 had yet to be implemented.



In other words, other respondents agreed that B-Fest had been well-socialized but were not yet interested in visiting one of the events at the festival. Then, regarding B-Fest 2022 as an essential attraction for Banyuwangi tourism, another perception emerged even though respondents did not visit the event at B-Fest 2022 at all. As many as 70.9% (66 people) agreed that B-Fest 2022 could be a primary tourist attraction in Banyuwangi District.

On the other hand, there were responses through content analysis of comments from 191 respondents who had visited B-Fest 2022. In terms of reasons related to selecting events at B-Fest, they said this event was interesting (22.5%), fun (19.1%), relaxing (19.1%), likes (10.9%), entertaining (2.6%), exciting (2.6%), and so on. Then, regarding the advantages of this event, most of them focus on education (20%), culture (19.1%), science (8%), street food (5%), and so on. As an illustration of interest in holding it in the future, 98.9%, or around 189 people, they are agreed that a festival like B-Fest would be born again the following year. This is in accordance with B-Fest 2023, which will be implemented in 2023 with 55 events. This market survey shows that B-Fest needs the proper promotion focus in the following years. However, we know that the challenge faced by the Banyuwangi government is carrying out promotions during the pandemic recovery periodic

In general, the promotional model used by the local government has involved the community, especially at the beginning of screening the types of events for B-Fest 2022. This aligns with what the Meranti Islands District Tourism Office did in promoting the Cian Cui Festival as regional tourism [23]. It requires a focused promotional model as a coastal area with diverse cultural and social communities. The interactional communication model implemented by the Banyuwangi government is more than merely promotion. The government also uses feedback from tourists or the public as event actors to be able to carry out the B-Fest event as optimally as possible. However, there needs to be a specific focus from the government when sorting out the determining aspects of promoting B-Fest in the coming years.

Based on the presentation of the promotion model above, there are several supporting and inhibiting aspects of the promotion model from the local government in B-Fest 2022. The supporting aspects of the B-Fest 2022 promotion are:

1. Participation of local people and communities in supporting every event in B-Fest 2022.

2. The intensity of the local government's performance in pandemic recovery through the "Banyuwangi Rebound" program, one of which is economic recovery. So that strengthening activities for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) at the B-Fest event can be maximized.

3. Banyuwangi District geographical area maximized in all its lines to be used as content in every marketing strategy before 2021.

4. Various stakeholders with connectivity with the local government are maximized as a link with communities outside the Banyuwangi district.

However, there are various obstacles to the promotion of B-Fest 2022, namely:

1. External stakeholder segmentation only focuses on social media influencers outside Banyuwangi who have direct transportation access to the Banyuwangi district.

2. Organizing Festival by the Jember district is the closest competitive competitor, with the Jember Fashion Carnival (JFC) as one of them.

3. There are so many variants of events being held that there needs to be more focus on the event screening process for B-Fest.

4. Lack of attention to the local visitor segment. This is considered important considering that very few respondents have little interest in organizing B-Fest.

There are two main points for each from both supporting and inhibiting aspects. The participation of local people and communities as a supporting aspect and the lack of a local visitor segment as an inhibiting aspect are separate explorations for promoting the B-Fest event. Community and local community participation is a crucial asset in the planning process for the 2022 B-Fest event. This is because local wisdom and the community's social conditions are certainly important assets that can be promoted at every event that will be held at B-Fest. Therefore, the government will focus increasingly on the core events in each theme of the B-Fest implementation. Meanwhile, dependence on the foreign tourist segment or domestic tourists as the main target of B-Fest visitors means that local visitors receive less attention. In reality, local communities have made an economic turnaround daily in Banyuwangi district. However, as part of a tourist attraction, B-Fest needs to be aimed at local visitors as part of the role of tourists who contribute to income from their area when this B-Fest takes place.

## 4. Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, it shows that the promotional model from the local government is very focused on the efficiency of implementing B-Fest itself. The efficiency in question is the grouping based on the target market for B-Fest 2022. Generally, the promotion model implemented by the Banyuwangi government through the tourism office is optimal. The interactional communication model used in promoting B-Fest 2022 prioritizes expectations for feedback from potential tourists and the public. However, several identifications are related to supporting and inhibiting aspects of the local government in implementing B-Fest 2022. This research recommends that the government look at local communities as one of the important promotional targets. This will increase crowds and profits for B-Fest organizers in the following years. Apart from that, strengthening regeneration in each local youth organization and community will result in the sustainability of B-Fest in the future. In the end, sustainable festival promotion needs to look at the community aspect as a supporter of the supply and demand factors for each planned event.

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