



The Implementation of Green Economy Principles in Sustainable Tourism: A Case Study of Otak Kokok Joben, East Lombok, Indonesia

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Abstract: The increasing adoption of green economy narratives in tourism development raises important questions about how such principles are interpreted and practiced at the local level, particularly within conservation-based tourism settings. This study explores the implementation of green economy principles in community-based sustainable tourism at the Otak Kokok Joben Ecotourism Site, East Lombok, Indonesia. Using a qualitative descriptive case study approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with fifteen key stakeholders, field observations, and document analysis. Rather than assessing economic or environmental performance quantitatively, the study focuses on understanding local practices, perceptions, and governance arrangements related to green economy implementation. The findings indicate that green economy principles are primarily manifested through livelihood diversification, community participation in conservation activities, and normative commitments to environmental protection. However, the implementation remains uneven and is constrained by limited infrastructure, informal monitoring mechanisms, and fragmented institutional coordination. This study does not aim to evaluate impact or propose a generalizable development model. Instead, it provides contextual insight into the opportunities and limitations of translating green economy concepts into practice within a single ecotourism case. The findings contribute to the literature on sustainable tourism by highlighting how governance structures and local capacity shape the practical enactment of green economy principles in protected-area tourism contexts.

Introduction

Uncontrolled economic growth has generated material prosperity while simultaneously intensifying ecological degradation, including deforestation, biodiversity loss, and pollution. These dynamics have prompted renewed calls to rethink development models that reconcile economic activity with environmental sustainability(1,2). According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), global surface temperatures have increased by more than 1.1°C above pre-industrial levels, resulting in sea-level rise and increasingly frequent extreme weather events that threaten both ecosystems and human livelihoods (3). In Indonesia, rapid economic expansion has coincided with a substantial rise in carbon emissions, reflecting persistent structural tensions between development imperatives and environmental protection (4). These dynamics have prompted renewed calls to rethink dominant economic models that prioritize growth while externalizing environmental costs (5).

In response to these challenges, the green economy has

been promoted as a framework for reconciling economic activity with environmental sustainability and social inclusion (6). Broadly defined, the green economy emphasizes low-carbon development, resource efficiency, and equitable distribution of benefits (7). However, critical scholarship has cautioned that the concept often remains normatively appealing but empirically underexamined, particularly in developing-country contexts where institutional capacity, behavioral change, and infrastructure constraints complicate implementation (8). In the tourism sector, these tensions are especially pronounced. While tourism is frequently positioned as a driver of sustainable development, tourism activities in ecologically sensitive areas often reproduce patterns of environmental degradation through waste generation, ecosystem disturbance, and water pollution (9). In Indonesia, where tourism contributes approximately 5% to national GDP, this dual character positions tourism as both a potential catalyst for green economic transformation and a source of intensified environmental pressure (10).

Despite the growing body of literature on green economy and sustainable tourism, several gaps remain. First, much

existing research operates at macro or policy levels, emphasizing national strategies, economic indicators, or sectoral trends, while offering limited insight into how green economy principles are interpreted and enacted at the community level. Second, studies on community-based tourism often assume that local participation inherently produces sustainable outcomes, with insufficient attention to internal tensions, uneven power relations, and implementation challenges. Third, the concept of the green economy is frequently invoked without a clear operational definition that informs empirical analysis, leading to ambiguity between descriptive practices, evaluative claims, and normative aspirations.

This study addresses these gaps by examining green economy implementation as a situated and negotiated process within a single qualitative case study. The Otak Kokok Joben ecotourism site in East Lombok was selected based on three criteria: its location within the Rinjani National Park conservation area, its long-standing role as a community-managed tourism destination, and its formal integration into environmental programs such as waste management initiatives and the Kampung Iklim (ProKlim) program. These characteristics make Otak Kokok Joben analytically relevant as a site where conservation mandates, tourism development, and community livelihoods intersect in practice rather than policy rhetoric.

Within this study, the green economy is operationally understood as a set of locally articulated practices and governance arrangements that seek to balance economic livelihood strategies, environmental stewardship, and social participation. Rather than measuring outcomes quantitatively, this research focuses on how green economy principles are perceived, implemented, and contested by local stakeholders in everyday tourism management. Accordingly, the study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach to explore three interrelated dimensions: [1] how economic activities linked to tourism are framed in relation to environmental responsibility; [2] how environmental management practices are organized and justified; and [3] how social relationships and institutional coordination shape implementation outcomes.

The objective of this research is therefore not to evaluate performance or propose a prescriptive development model, but to analyze how green economy ideas are translated into practice within a specific socio-ecological context. By doing so, the study contributes empirical insight into the limits and possibilities of community-based green economy initiatives in sustainable tourism, offering a grounded perspective that complements and critically engages with dominant narratives in the green economy literature.

Methodology

Study Design and Rationale

This study employed a qualitative descriptive case-study design to examine how green economy principles are interpreted and implemented within a community-based sustainable tourism context. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the research sought to explore meanings, practices, and governance processes rather than to measure outcomes or test causal relationships. Specifically, the study aimed to understand how local actors perceive economic activities, environmental responsibilities, and social coordination within the Otak Kokok Joben ecotourism site.

The qualitative descriptive design allowed the researcher to examine social phenomena in their natural setting and to capture participants' perspectives without imposing predefined evaluative indicators or experimental controls. In this study, the green economy was operationalized as a set of locally articulated practices and institutional arrangements that seek to balance livelihood strategies, environmental stewardship, and community participation. Accordingly, the research did not aim to assess performance levels or quantify impacts, but to analyze how green economy ideas are translated into everyday tourism management practices.

Study Area and Research Context

The research was conducted at the Otak Kokok Joben Ecotourism Site, located within the Rinjani National Park Conservation Area in Montong Gading District, East Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia (approximately 8°32'S, 116°27'E). Tropical forest ecosystems, freshwater springs, and community-managed tourism facilities characterize the site. As part of a formally protected conservation area, tourism activities at Otak Kokok Joben are subject to conservation regulations and oversight by the Rinjani National Park Authority.

Otak Kokok Joben was selected as a case study based on three criteria: [1] its location within a legally protected conservation area, [2] its long-standing implementation of community-based tourism management, and [3] its integration with local environmental initiatives, including waste management practices and participation in the Kampung Iklim (ProKlim) program. The site is managed through collaboration between the Community Forest Care Group (*Kelompok Masyarakat Peduli Hutan, KMPH*) and park authorities, providing an institutional setting in which community participation, conservation mandates, and tourism development intersect.

This research context offers an appropriate setting to examine how green economy principles are interpreted and enacted by local actors within a conservation-oriented tourism system, without presupposing specific sustainability outcomes.

Sampling Strategy and Participants

Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure the inclusion of individuals with direct involvement and experiential knowledge of ecotourism management and environmental practices at the study site. Inclusion criteria required participants to have been engaged in tourism-related activities, conservation initiatives, or site governance for a minimum of one year. This criterion was applied to exclude peripheral actors with limited familiarity with day-to-day practices.

The final sample consisted of fifteen participants: five representatives from the Rinjani National Park Authority, six community members affiliated with the Community Forest Care Group (*Kelompok Masyarakat Peduli Hutan, KMPH*), and four local tourism-related entrepreneurs. While the sample size was relatively small, it was considered sufficient for in-depth qualitative inquiry. Thematic saturation was assessed iteratively during data collection by monitoring the recurrence of codes and themes across interviews. Saturation was considered achieved when subsequent interviews no longer generated substantively new themes but reiterated previously identified patterns across economic, environmental, and social dimensions.

Potential power asymmetries among stakeholders were

acknowledged, particularly between park authorities and community members. To mitigate this, interviews were conducted individually and in neutral settings, allowing participants to express their views without the presence of other stakeholder groups.

Data Collection Methods

Data were collected between May and August 2024 using three qualitative methods: participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Employing multiple data sources enabled methodological triangulation and strengthened the credibility of the findings.

Observations were guided by a structured checklist focusing on environmental management practices and tourism operations. Key observation categories included waste handling practices, restrictions on chemical use, vegetation protection, visitor behavior in sensitive areas, and interactions between site managers and visitors. Field notes were recorded systematically to capture both routine practices and situational variations between peak and low tourist periods.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants’ experiences and interpretations of sustainable tourism and green economy practices. Interview questions addressed perceptions of economic benefits, environmental responsibilities, governance arrangements, and implementation challenges. Each interview lasted approximately 45-60 min, was conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, audio-recorded with informed consent, and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Document analysis included the review of local agreements, policy documents, environmental program reports, and photographic records related to conservation and tourism activities. These documents were used to contextualize interview data and to examine the formal narratives and regulations surrounding ecotourism management at the site.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The coding process was conducted during the data reduction stage and proceeded through three iterative phases: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. First, open coding was applied inductively to interview transcripts, field notes, and documents to identify recurring concepts related to livelihoods, environmental responsibility, participation, and governance. Examples of initial codes included “livelihood diversification,” “forest protection norms,” “visitor non-compliance,” and “informal enforcement.” In the second phase, axial coding was used to group related codes into broader categories and to explore relationships among practices, actors, and institutional arrangements. For example, codes relating to small-scale economic activities, reduced forest extraction, and seasonal income stability were clustered under the category “livelihood-oriented tourism practices.” In the final phase, selective coding was employed to refine and integrate categories into three overarching analytical themes aligned with the study’s conceptual framework: economic practices, environmental governance, and social participation. **Table 1** presents an overview of the main themes, categories, and illustrative codes generated during analysis. Coding decisions were documented through analytic memos, and themes were

Table 1. Overview of coding structure and analytical themes.

Analytical Theme	Category	Illustrative Codes
Economic practices	Livelihood-oriented tourism practices	Supplementary income from tourism, coffee processing, handicraft production, food provision for visitors, and seasonal income stability
	Reduced pressure on forest resources	Alternative livelihoods, reduced forest extraction, and dependence on ecological continuity
Environmental governance	Normative conservation practices	Waste segregation, restrictions on chemical use near water sources, reforestation activities, participation in Kampung Iklim (ProKlim)
	Governance and monitoring limitations	Voluntary visitor compliance, lack of formal monitoring mechanisms, informal enforcement, and limited infrastructure
Social participation	Community involvement in tourism and conservation	Collective activities, local stewardship, environmental awareness, operational participation
	Uneven power relations	Managerial decision dominance, limited community decision-making authority, dependence on park authority

continuously refined through comparison across interviews, observations, and documents. Data display and conclusion drawing were conducted iteratively through analytical matrices and constant comparison across data sources.

Ethical Considerations and Researcher Positionality

Ethical approval and local research permissions were obtained prior to data collection. All participants provided informed consent and were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Pseudonyms were used during transcription and analysis to protect participants’ identities. The researcher maintained reflexive field notes to account for positionality and potential bias, particularly given prolonged engagement with the study site.

Results

Green Economy as Lived Practice in Community-Based Ecotourism

Analysis of interview transcripts and field observations indicates that green economy principles at Otak Kokok Joben are primarily articulated through everyday practices and shared understandings rather than through formal economic

indicators or performance metrics. Across interviews, participants consistently framed tourism-related activities as a means of sustaining livelihoods while maintaining environmental integrity, rather than as a strategy for economic expansion or profit maximization. One community member involved in tourism-related production stated, *"Tourism helps us earn income without taking more from the forest. If the forest is damaged, tourists will not come anymore."*

This view was echoed by other community participants, who described tourism as a livelihood-supporting activity that depends on ecological continuity. Small-scale economic practices such as coffee processing, handicraft production, and food provision were repeatedly described as supplementary rather than primary income sources. These activities were perceived as reducing pressure on forest resources and providing economic stability, particularly during agricultural off-seasons.

Field observations corroborated these narratives, showing that economic activities were generally small in scale and closely integrated with conservation norms. This suggests that, at the local level, the green economy is understood less as an abstract development framework and more as a pragmatic approach to balancing subsistence needs with environmental stewardship.

Environmental Management Practices and Governance Constraints

Environmental management at Otak Kokok Joben was expressed through a range of conservation-oriented practices, including waste segregation, restrictions on chemical use near water sources, and participation in reforestation activities linked to the Kampung Iklim (ProKlim) program. Interview participants frequently framed these practices as moral obligations tied to the site's status within a protected conservation area. A site manager explained, *"Because this area is protected, we have to be careful. If we damage the environment, it will be a problem not only for us but also for the park authority."*

However, both interview data and field observations revealed notable limitations in the implementation of these practices. Waste separation facilities and environmental signage were present, yet their effectiveness depended largely on voluntary visitor compliance. During periods of high visitor activity, observations recorded instances of improper waste disposal and limited adherence to site regulations. As one participant noted, *"We have rules and signs, but we cannot force visitors. We can only remind them."*

The absence of systematic monitoring mechanisms or ecological indicators limited the ability of local actors to assess the environmental effectiveness of conservation activities. Environmental management thus functioned primarily as a set of normative commitments rather than as an enforceable governance system. This reliance on informal regulation reflects broader institutional constraints faced by community-managed tourism initiatives operating within protected areas.

Social Participation and Uneven Power Relations

Social dimensions of green economy implementation were articulated through narratives of participation, collective responsibility, and shared environmental awareness.

Community members described involvement in tourism management and conservation activities as increasing their understanding of the relationship between environmental quality and livelihood sustainability.

Women's participation in small-scale tourism-related production, such as herbal drinks and traditional handicrafts, was frequently cited as an example of inclusive engagement. One participant explained that these activities allowed women to contribute economically while remaining involved in household and community responsibilities.

Despite these positive accounts, closer analysis revealed persistent power asymmetries among stakeholders. While community members were actively involved in daily operational activities, strategic decision-making authority remained concentrated among site managers and representatives of the national park authority. This dynamic was articulated by a community participant who stated, *"We are involved in activities, but most decisions are still made by the managers and the park."*

This pattern was consistently observed across interviews with both community members and park officials, indicating that participation was primarily operational rather than deliberative. These findings challenge assumptions that community-based tourism automatically produces egalitarian governance structures and highlight the importance of institutional context in shaping participation outcomes.

Perceived Benefits and Persistent Challenges

Across interviews, participants described the benefits of tourism development primarily in qualitative terms. Rather than emphasizing income growth, respondents highlighted livelihood diversification, reduced reliance on forest extraction, and increased environmental awareness as key outcomes. Tourism was viewed as providing continuity and resilience rather than economic expansion.

At the same time, several persistent challenges were consistently identified. Limited visitor awareness of environmental regulations, inadequate waste management infrastructure, and the absence of formal monitoring and evaluation mechanisms were repeatedly cited as constraints on effective implementation. Field observations during peak visitation periods further underscored these challenges, particularly in relation to waste disposal and visitor behavior in sensitive areas.

Taken together, these findings indicate that while green economy principles are recognized and partially enacted at Otak Kokok Joben, their implementation remains fragile and highly dependent on voluntary compliance and individual commitment. The results suggest that local values and participation are necessary but insufficient conditions for sustaining green economy practices without supportive governance structures and institutional capacity.

Discussion

This study interprets the implementation of green economy principles at Otak Kokok Joben as a contextual and practice-based process rather than as a set of measurable economic or environmental outcomes. The findings suggest that, at the community level, the green economy is understood primarily as an effort to balance livelihood continuity with environmental responsibility. This interpretation is consistent with the definition of the green economy proposed by the United Nations Environment Programme, which emphasizes resource efficiency and social inclusion rather than economic

growth alone (11). However, the empirical evidence indicates that these principles are enacted through everyday practices and informal norms rather than through formal indicators or standardized performance measurements.

Rather than demonstrating economic growth or resilience, the qualitative perceptions documented in this study resonate with broader arguments in the literature that position sustainable tourism as a potential contributor to local economic continuity in developing contexts (12,13). The findings of this study indicate that economic benefits are perceived qualitatively rather than quantified. This supports arguments that inclusive green economy transitions in developing contexts are often constrained by structural limitations, including limited access to finance and policy support (14).

From an environmental perspective, conservation-oriented practices such as waste segregation, restrictions on chemical use, and participation in reforestation initiatives reflect a normative commitment to environmental protection. These practices correspond with ecological modernization theory, which posits that environmental considerations can be integrated into economic activities (15). However, the absence of systematic monitoring mechanisms or ecological indicators limits the ability to assess the actual environmental effectiveness of these actions. This finding reinforces concerns raised in sustainable tourism literature that environmental initiatives often emphasize activities rather than demonstrable ecological impacts (16). As a result, environmental governance at Otak Kokok Joben relies largely on voluntary compliance and social norms rather than enforceable regulatory mechanisms.

Socially, the findings indicate that community participation plays a central role in sustaining green economy practices, particularly through collective action and shared environmental awareness. The involvement of women in small-scale tourism-related production reflects elements of social inclusion that align with broader sustainability objectives. Nevertheless, participation was primarily operational, while strategic decision-making authority remained embedded within existing institutional arrangements. This observation challenges idealized assumptions that community-based tourism inherently produces equitable governance structures and supports critiques emphasizing persistent power asymmetries within participatory frameworks (17).

The implementation of national programs such as Kampung Iklim (ProKlim) illustrates how climate adaptation initiatives are localized through community practice. While the program provides organizational support and symbolic recognition, its long-term effectiveness depends on sustained institutional commitment. This finding is consistent with the concept of community resilience, which highlights the importance of governance continuity and social networks in sustaining adaptive capacity (18). Without consistent monitoring and policy integration, such initiatives risk becoming symbolic rather than transformative.

At the institutional level, the findings underscore the importance of multi-level governance in shaping green economy implementation. Collaboration between the Rinjani National Park Authority, local government, and community groups reflects elements of collaborative governance (19). However, the lack of structured evaluation frameworks and clear performance indicators constrains accountability and limits the potential for scaling up local initiatives. Similar

challenges have been observed in other ecotourism contexts, where fragmented policy frameworks hinder the transition from localized projects to sustained institutional practices (20). Consequently, the Otak Kokok Joben case should be understood as context-specific rather than readily replicable.

Overall, this study contributes to the literature on sustainable tourism and the green economy by highlighting the gap between normative sustainability frameworks and their practical realization at the community level. Rather than presenting Otak Kokok Joben as a model of success, the findings demonstrate that green economy practices are negotiated, incomplete, and shaped by institutional constraints. This perspective enriches existing discussions on triple-bottom-line sustainability by illustrating how environmental, economic, and social objectives interact within the limitations of local governance structures.

Conclusion

This study examined the implementation of green economy principles within a community-based ecotourism setting at Otak Kokok Joben, East Lombok, using a qualitative descriptive case study approach. The analysis focused on how local actors understand, apply, and negotiate green economy ideas in the context of sustainable tourism management, rather than on measuring economic or environmental outcomes. The findings suggest that green economy implementation at the site is shaped by community participation, livelihood-oriented tourism activities, and informal environmental norms. While local engagement plays an important role in sustaining conservation-related practices, the absence of formal monitoring systems, limited infrastructure, and uneven institutional coordination constrain the consolidation of green economy principles. These conditions indicate that community participation alone is insufficient to ensure consistent or long-term sustainability outcomes without supportive governance structures. Given the study's single-case design, small sample size, and reliance on qualitative data, the findings are not intended to be generalized or used as evidence of replicability or scalability. The research is also limited by its cross-sectional nature and by the interpretive subjectivity inherent in qualitative inquiry. These limitations underscore the need for caution in extending the findings beyond the specific socio-ecological and institutional context of Otak Kokok Joben. Future research could address these limitations by conducting comparative case studies across multiple ecotourism sites, incorporating longitudinal designs to capture institutional change over time, or combining qualitative analysis with carefully defined quantitative indicators. Overall, this study contributes to sustainable tourism scholarship by offering a context-sensitive account of how green economy principles are enacted, constrained, and negotiated within a local conservation-based tourism setting.

Declarations

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicting interest.

Data Availability

All data generated or analyzed during this study are included in this published article.

Ethics Statement

Ethical approval was not required for this study.

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Additional Information

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