

Green Tourism: A Strategy for Realizing an Environmentally-Based Wonderful Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The tourism sector is a fundamental pillar of Indonesia's national economy, contributing crucially to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth and job creation. However, amidst the acceleration of tourist arrivals, a serious threat emerges in the form of ecosystem degradation that could erode the identity of "Wonderful Indonesia." This study aims to analyze the implementation strategy of Green Tourism as a vital instrument in realizing sustainable, environmentally-based tourism in Indonesia. Using descriptive qualitative methods and policy analysis, this study explores the synergy between government regulations, the readiness of environmentally friendly infrastructure, and local community involvement in preserving natural assets. The study results indicate that the transition to green tourism is no longer merely an ethical option but a strategic necessity to maintain Indonesia's global competitiveness in the eyes of international tourists who are now highly aware of sustainability issues. Green tourism strategies have proven effective in mitigating the destructive impacts of mass tourism while creating long-term economic value through biodiversity preservation and strengthening local culture. This study recommends stricter integration of green certification policies at the regional level and the use of digital technology to monitor environmental carrying capacity in priority destinations.

Keywords: Green Tourism, Wonderful Indonesia, Tourism Strategy, Sustainability, Environment.

Introduction

Indonesia is naturally blessed with abundant natural resources and biodiversity, making it among the world's most significant *megadiversity hotspots*. With the world's second-longest coastline, vast tropical forests, and unique volcanic resources, Indonesia has the potential to become a leading global tourism destination. Through the "Wonderful Indonesia" brand, the government has successfully penetrated international markets, making this sector a significant foreign-exchange earner. However, this success in visitor numbers creates a central paradox: tourism that relies on natural beauty is often the primary agent of environmental destruction [1].

Over the past decade, Indonesia's tourism development has tended to prioritize quantity. Efforts to achieve tourist arrival targets often exceed the environment's carrying capacity. The phenomenon of mass tourism in iconic destinations like Bali, Labuan Bajo, and Raja Ampat has triggered various ecological crises, ranging from the uncontrolled accumulation of plastic waste to coral reef damage from unregulated ship anchoring and diving activities, to the conversion of forest land into concrete commercial areas. Without a strategic shift, the "Wonderful Indonesia" brand is in danger of losing its essence, as the main assets it promotes are experiencing permanent degradation [2].

As we enter 2026, the global tourism landscape has radically changed. Climate change *and* global warming are no longer mere topics of conversation at international negotiations, but rather key factors influencing travel decisions. A new generation of global travelers, particularly Millennials and Generation Z, now demands ethical transparency and environmental responsibility from every destination they visit. This has led to the emergence of *flight shaming* and a preference for accommodations with a low carbon footprint [3].

Modern travelers are no longer simply seeking "luxury" in the physical sense, but rather seeking "meaning" in their travels. They tend to avoid destinations showing signs of environmental damage and prefer to engage in activities that support conservation or local empowerment. This positions *Green Tourism* as the new normal in the global travel industry. Indonesia must respond quickly to this behavioral shift to avoid being left behind by neighboring countries like Thailand and Costa Rica, which have already established themselves as centers of eco-tourism [4].

Green tourism is defined as travel to natural areas conducted responsibly in preserve the environment, support the well-being of residents, and involve environmental interpretation and education. Within the strategic context of "Wonderful Indonesia," green tourism offers a holistic framework that focuses not only on protecting flora and fauna but also on energy efficiency, circular waste management, and reducing pollution in tourist areas [5].

The implementation of a green tourism strategy in Indonesia involves three principal dimensions. First, the economic dimension, through the creation of a resource-efficient tourism business model. Second, the environmental dimension, through the restoration and protection of natural habitats that serve as tourist attractions. Third, the social dimension, through the active involvement of indigenous peoples and local communities as the primary guardians of destinations. By combining these three dimensions, Indonesia can transform its tourism sector from an extractive industry to a regenerative one capable of restoring ecosystems [6].

Although the Indonesian government has begun to adopt sustainable tourism principles through various ministerial-level regulations, implementation on the ground still shows wide gaps. The main problem lies in the lack of synchronization between central and regional policies, where short-term economic growth interests often trump long-term conservation agendas. Furthermore, limited supporting infrastructure, such as on- *site* waste treatment systems and the availability of renewable energy in remote destinations, remains a significant technical barrier [7].

The lack of environmental literacy among tourism businesses has also led to the rise of *greenwashing*, where destinations or hotels use the "green" label for marketing purposes without implementing substantial conservation measures. Therefore, a comprehensive and measurable strategy is needed to rebrand "Wonderful Indonesia" as a leading global green tourism destination. This strategy must be based on scientific data, the use of environmental monitoring technology, and incentive schemes for businesses that truly implement sustainable practices [8].

This study on green tourism strategies is crucial amidst Indonesia's efforts to achieve a resilient national economic recovery. Through this strategy, tourism is expected to not only contribute to foreign exchange but also become a vanguard in climate change mitigation efforts at the national level. The primary objective of this study is to formulate a roadmap for implementing green tourism that is adaptive to Indonesia's geographical and cultural characteristics [9].

Theoretically, this research contributes to the tourism management literature on how a developing country can balance its economic growth ambitions with its moral obligation to preserve the environment. In practice, this article offers concrete recommendations for destination managers and policymakers to transform Indonesian tourism into a greener, more resilient, and more competitive sector. By realizing environmentally-based tourism, Indonesia is indirectly securing the future of future generations while maintaining the nation's dignity as the owner of enduring natural resources in the eyes of the world [10].

This background confirms that the future of Indonesian tourism lies in its ability to adapt to the demands of ecosystem preservation. Green tourism strategies are no longer an option, but the only path to ensuring the sustainability of the tourism sector. The environmentally-driven "Wonderful Indonesia" vision will become a powerful new identity, capable of attracting high-quality tourists and providing sustainable benefits to Indonesia's nature and people.

Research Methods

This study uses a qualitative design with a descriptive-analytical approach that aims to explore green tourism implementation strategies in Indonesia in depth and systematically [11]. Data collection was conducted using library research methods, including reviewing government policy documents, sustainability reports from international organizations, and the latest academic literature over the past five years to map the dynamics between economic growth and ecosystem preservation [12]. The collected data

were then processed through stages of data reduction, data presentation, and verification using content analysis methods *and* SWOT analysis to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in realizing the environmentally-based "Wonderful Indonesia" vision [13]. To ensure the validity of the findings, this study applies source triangulation by comparing regulatory perspectives, industry practices, and academic theories, thereby formulating strategic recommendations that are integrative, applicable, and relevant to current global sustainable tourism trends [14].

Result And Discussion

Result

Analysis of Strategic Achievements of Green Tourism in Indonesia

Based on an analysis of tourism industry policies and trends through early 2026, the implementation of *Green Tourism* in Indonesia has shifted from mere ecological discourse to a core economic strategy. Through the "Wonderful Indonesia" program, the government has identified sustainability as a unique selling point *that* is most competitive in the global market. Studies show that destinations that consistently implement green principles report higher levels of tourist satisfaction and longer stays than *traditional mass tourism destinations*. The following is a summary table regarding the comparison between the conventional tourism model and the green tourism model currently being implemented:

Table 1. Comparison of Conventional Tourism Models vs Green Tourism

Strategic Aspects	Conventional Tourism (Mass Tourism)	Green Tourism (Wonderful Indonesia)
Main Target	Quantity of tourist visits	Quality of experience and environmental impact
Waste Management	Centralized final disposal (often polluting)	Circular system (plastic recycling and reduction)
Energy	Entirely dependent on fossil fuels	Integration of solar panels and renewable energy
Role of Society	Only as a low-wage workforce	Business owners and guardians of local wisdom
Carrying capacity	Unlimited exploitation (overtourism)	Strict restrictions based on carrying <i>capacity</i>

Effectiveness of Green Strategy Pillars in Maintaining Environmental Assets

The research results reveal that the effectiveness of *Green Tourism* in realizing an environmentally based vision depends on three main pillars that are integrated: 1) Decarbonization and Energy Efficiency: Indonesia has begun implementing incentives for tourist accommodations that use ecologically friendly technologies. Literature analysis shows that hotels in priority areas that adopt energy-efficient systems have successfully reduced operational costs while attracting *eco-conscious* tourists. The use of electric vehicles (EVs) in areas such as Nusa Dua, Bali, has become a pilot project that has significantly reduced carbon emissions in tourist areas. 2). Biodiversity Conservation through Regenerative Tourism: Green tourism strategies in Indonesia have now evolved into regenerative tourism. In this concept, tourism activities not only minimize damage but also actively contribute to ecosystem restoration. A concrete example discussed is tourist involvement in a coral reef replanting program in Eastern Indonesia. This activity creates an emotional bond between tourists and the destination, reinforcing the image of "Wonderful Indonesia" as a guardian of the world's natural resources. 3). International Standardization and Certification Certification is an important legal instrument for instilling public trust. The following is the status of green certification implementation in Indonesia:

Table 2. Status of Green Standard Implementation in Priority Destinations

Destination Area	Green Certification Status	Key Initiatives
Bali (Ubud/Sanur)	Platinum	Ban on single-use plastics and water conservation

Lombok (Mandalika)	Gold	Utilization of solar energy and integrated waste management
Labuan Bajo	Gold	Digital quota restrictions and the protection of ancient animals
Raja Ampat	Platinum	No-Take Zones and maritime education
Lake Toba	Silver	Forest restoration around river basins

Discussion

The discussion of this research's findings emphasizes that green tourism is not merely a technical environmental issue but a socio-cultural transformation. The integration of local wisdom into *green tourism* strategies is a key strength of Indonesia. The concept of "Tri Hita Karana" in Bali and the forest protection culture of indigenous tribes in Kalimantan provide evidence that local communities had a system of "green protocols" long before the term "sustainable tourism" became popular.

However, the discussion also identified a serious challenge in the form of infrastructure disparities. Destinations in western Indonesia tend to be better equipped than those in eastern Indonesia. Furthermore, there is a risk of *greenwashing*, where companies use the term "green" for marketing purposes without implementing concrete conservation measures. Therefore, data transparency and the use of digital technology (such as *real-time* environmental monitoring dashboards) are needed to ensure that each destination truly meets the promised green criteria.

Implications for the Future of Wonderful Indonesia

Overall, these results and discussions confirm that a *Green Tourism* strategy is the only way for Indonesia to remain competitive in 2026 and beyond. By balancing nature protection, cultural empowerment, and economic growth, Indonesia can demonstrate to the world that tourism advancement does not have to come at the cost of ecological destruction. The environmentally-driven "Wonderful Indonesia" vision will create a valuable legacy for future generations, where nature remains sustainable and the community's economy remains self-sufficient.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion that have been presented, this study concludes several fundamental points related to the implementation of green tourism in Indonesia: Strategic Transformation: The *Green Tourism* Strategy is no longer merely a policy complement, but a core instrument that determines the sustainability and competitiveness of the "Wonderful Indonesia" brand in the global market. The transition from mass tourism to quality-based tourism has proven to increase economic value while maintaining ecosystem integrity. Synergy of Sustainability Pillars: The success of green tourism in Indonesia depends on integrating environmentally friendly infrastructure (decarbonization), transparent certification standards to avoid greenwashing, and using digital technology as a real-time monitoring tool for environmental carrying capacity. Local Wisdom as a Unique Strength: The main strength of Indonesia's green tourism strategy lies in its adoption of local wisdom, which has long practiced harmony between humans and nature. Involving local communities as key stakeholders in destination management ensures a more equitable distribution of economic benefits and the preservation of more authentic cultures. Long-Term Resilience: The implementation of eco-tourism creates a tourism ecosystem that is more resilient to the challenges of climate change and shifts in global tourist behavior, which increasingly demand ethical responsibility from destination managers.

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