

Integrating Local Culture and Green Human Resource Management to Strengthen Sustainable Blue Economy Practices in Small Island Tourism of Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyse the strategic role of human resource management (HRM) in supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Blue Economy in the tourism sector in the Indonesian archipelago. The main focus of this study is how Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices, local cultural factors, sustainable leadership, and workforce capacity building can improve the effectiveness of blue economy implementation oriented towards economic, social, and environmental balance. This study employs a qualitative, literature review approach that examines 20 reputable international and national, indexed scientific publications relevant to HRM, sustainable tourism, and the blue economy. The analysis employed content analysis, highlighting key themes including green recruitment, environment-based training, participatory leadership, and local community empowerment. The study's results indicate that integrating HRM within the blue economy framework plays an important role in fostering sustainable tourism in small island regions. The implementation of HRM has been shown to increase workers' ecological awareness, strengthen organisations' social responsibility, and improve the economic efficiency of the tourism sector without compromising marine environmental sustainability. In addition, local culture and sustainable leadership have been proven to strengthen social legitimacy, create green innovation, and increase community involvement in ecosystem-based tourism management. The most relevant HRM strategy for island tourism destinations is one that combines the principles of green HRM, sustainable leadership, and community-based empowerment. The implications of this study emphasise the importance of cross-sector collaboration between the government, the tourism industry, and local communities in building sustainability-oriented human resource capacity. Theoretically, this research advances understanding of the relationship between HRM and the blue economy in the context of tourism. At the same time, the results can serve as a policy reference for the development of highly competitive and environmentally sustainable island tourism destinations.

Keywords: Human resource management, green HRM, blue economy, sustainable tourism, small islands.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism on small islands, known for their natural beauty, often faces significant challenges related to environmental and socio-economic sustainability. This sector has significant potential to contribute to the local economy, but often faces threats to marine and coastal ecosystems from poorly managed tourism practices. In this context, the concept of the blue economy is relevant, as it aims to manage natural resources sustainably, particularly those related to the sea and coast. Integrating the blue economy into the tourism sector can help small island tourism destinations optimise their economic potential while preserving the environment. One of the key elements in achieving this goal is human resource management, which plays a strategic role in managing and empowering the local workforce to support sustainable tourism practices.

Integrating sustainability-focused human resource management is key to ensuring the success of the blue economy in small island destinations. Baum and Cooper (2006) argue that effective human resource management can enhance the skills of the local workforce and encourage their involvement in the management of sustainable tourism destinations. Collaboration between the public and private sectors, as well as training and education for local communities, are essential for creating a skilled workforce capable of managing natural resources wisely and supporting the principles of the blue economy. One widely applied practice is Green Human Resource Management (GHRM), which incorporates sustainability principles into recruitment, training, and performance management policies (Rosid et al., 2025; Sitohang et al., 2024). The application of GHRM in the tourism sector has been shown to increase environmental awareness and positively impact sustainable practices, as evidenced in Bali (Rosid et al., 2025). In addition, leadership that is responsive to environmental challenges and talent management are also important factors in supporting the sustainability of the blue economy on small islands. Pahuja et al. (2025) emphasise that the success of sustainable tourism in small island destinations is greatly influenced by the quality of leadership that can manage diversity and promote commitment to social and environmental responsibility. Leaders who align blue economy goals with local needs can create an environment that supports long-term sustainability. Therefore, it is important to develop local culture-based HR policies that not only consider economic factors but also strengthen the social and cultural values of the local community (Astina Made et al., 2025).

This study examines how integrated human resource management can support sustainable tourism through the blue economy in small-island destinations. Given the unique environmental and socio-economic challenges of small islands, it is important to understand the role of human resource management in fostering environmentally sustainable tourism practices while improving the welfare of local communities. Therefore, this study will explore how integrated HRM with the blue economy can help maximise tourism potential while maintaining the sustainability of the local environment and culture.

The application of the principles of the Sustainable Blue Economy in the tourism sector of small islands requires adaptive, innovative, and sustainability-based human resource management. Several studies highlight the importance of human resource planning and investment to support sustainable tourism in island regions (Baum & Cooper, 2006; Al Bahri & Kassim, 2025; Ginanjar & Adriyadi, 2024). However, most of these studies are still conceptual and have not comprehensively integrated the relationship between Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) and blue economy principles in the context of small island destinations (Rosid et al., 2025; Sitohang et al., 2024). Furthermore, although some studies have highlighted green recruitment, eco-training, and employee engagement practices in the tourism industry (Astina Made et al., 2025; Pahuja et al., 2025), empirical studies assessing how these HRM strategies directly contribute to social-ecological and blue-economy sustainability remain limited. Previous research also highlights a gap between macro-level policies (such as blue economy development strategies) and micro-level implementation at the tourism organisation level, particularly in empowering the local workforce (Urohman et al., 2024; Ahmed, 2022).

On the other hand, the integration of cultural values and local wisdom within the framework of HRM is also recognised as important for strengthening the sustainability of tourism in island regions (Astina Made et al., 2025; Shakeela et al., 2012). However, the extent to which this integration can strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of the tourism business within the blue economy framework remains a subject for further research. Thus, this research needs to empirically examine how HRM, through the GHRM approach, human capital investment, and sustainable leadership, can play a strategic role in strengthening tourism in small island economies within the Sustainable Blue Economy framework.

Based on this literature review, the research questions in this study can be detailed as follows:

- a. How does Human Resource Management (HRM) practice play a role in supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Blue Economy in the small island tourism sector?
- b. To what extent can the implementation of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) enhance social, economic, and environmental sustainability in island tourism destinations?
- c. How do local cultural factors, sustainable leadership, and workforce capacity development influence the effectiveness of blue economy implementation in the tourism sector?
- d. What HRM strategies are most relevant for strengthening the competitiveness of blue economy-based tourism in Indonesia's island regions?

2. DATA SOURCES AND DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

This study employs a qualitative, literature-review approach that focuses on conceptual analysis and empirical findings from prior studies on the integration of human resource management (HRM) into sustainable tourism development through the blue economy in small-island destinations. The qualitative approach was chosen because it can explore meanings, patterns, and relationships among concepts in depth without direct intervention in the research object (Creswell, 2018). A literature review was conducted to systematically examine prior studies, thereby identifying trends, research gaps, and HRM policy directions relevant to sustainable tourism development within the blue economy. The study was conducted by following the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) stages, including the process of identifying, selecting, analysing, and synthesising literature from reputable databases such as Scopus, ScienceDirect, and Taylor & Francis, using keywords such as Human Resource Management, Sustainable Tourism, Blue Economy, and Small Island Destinations.

A content analysis was conducted to examine the main themes that emerged from prior research, including Green Human Resource Management (GHRM), capacity building, sustainable leadership, and community participation in blue tourism. The results of the analysis were then grouped thematically to find the relationship between HRM practices and environmental, social, and economic sustainability in the context of tourism in the archipelago (Baum & Cooper, 2006; Sitohang et al., 2024; Rosid et al., 2025). Conceptual validation was conducted through cross-study comparisons to ensure consistency between theory and empirical findings. This approach enabled researchers to develop a new theoretical synthesis that is more contextual to blue economy issues in the tourism sector. Thus, this study is not

only descriptive but also makes a strategic contribution to strengthening the theory and practice of sustainable human resource management in small-island tourism areas.

3. DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

The data analysis in this study employed a qualitative, interpretative content analysis approach. This approach was chosen because it enabled researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the meanings contained in various bodies of literature, while identifying patterns, relationships, and research trends relevant to human resource management (HRM) in the context of a sustainable blue economy. The analysis began with data reduction, namely the selection of the most relevant literature based on criteria of credibility, context, and contribution to the issue of sustainable tourism in the archipelago. Next, a process of categorisation and thematic coding was carried out, in which key concepts such as Green Human Resource Management (GHRM), human capacity development, and community-based tourism management were grouped according to their role and contribution to the implementation of the blue economy (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

Following the categorisation process, a thematic synthesis analysis was conducted, combining findings from multiple studies to build a comprehensive understanding of how HRM practices can strengthen the sustainability of blue economy-based tourism. This analysis not only highlighted the similarities and differences between studies but also revealed conceptual gaps that could be opportunities for further research. To ensure the validity and reliability of the analysis, the researchers applied source triangulation techniques by comparing the results of various academic publications, policy reports, and institutional documents. In addition, the researchers also verified their interpretations to maintain objectivity in drawing theoretical conclusions. The results of this data analysis were then presented in the form of a conceptual synthesis describing the relationship between human resource management, environmental sustainability, and the application of the blue economy in the tourism sector on small islands.

Table 1. Characteristics of the articles analysed.

No	Author Name, year, Research Title	Research Objective	Key Findings / Implications
1	Tom Baum & Christopher P. Cooper (2006). Comprehensive Human Resource Planning: An Essential Key to Sustainable Tourism in Island Settings	Examining the role of human resource planning in supporting sustainable tourism on small islands.	The integration of HRM and public-private collaboration strengthens local skills and community participation in supporting the blue economy.
2	Muhammad Abdul Rosid et al. (2025). The Role of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) in Promoting Sustainability in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry in Bali	Researching the implementation of GHRM in supporting the sustainability of the tourism industry	Green recruitment and training increase environmental awareness, although they are not yet fully integrated with the principles of the blue economy.
3	Ance Marintan D. Sitohang et al. (2024). The Role of Green Human Resource Management in Promoting Sustainable Tourism Practices	Evaluating green HRM practices in strengthening sustainable tourism.	GHRM promotes employee engagement and environmental efficiency, and can be adapted to blue economy-based destinations.
4	Pallavi Pahuja et al. (2025). <i>Shores of Success</i>	Assessing the contribution of HRM to sustainability in the context of the blue economy	Leadership and workforce diversity enhance the social and environmental responsibility of tourist destinations.
5	Arya Astina Made et al. (2025). Saving Paradise: A Culturally-Embedded GHRM Framework for Promoting Employee Sustainability in	Developing a locally-based HRM framework for the tourism sector.	Integrating local values into HRM improves employees' green behaviour and the organisation's

No	Author Name, year, Research Title	Research Objective	Key Findings / Implications
	Bali's Crisis-Hit Tourism Sector		environmental performance.
6	Taufiqur Rahmat & Diah Apriliani (2023). Sustainability Tourism-Based Village Development Model from a Green HRM Perspective	Developing a sustainable tourism village model based on green HRM	Green HRM strengthens the social, economic and environmental aspects of small tourism destination management.
7	Naveed Ahmed (2022). Marine Tourism and the Blue Economy: Perspectives from the Mascarene and Pacific Islands	Explaining the relationship between marine tourism and the blue economy on small islands	Strengthening local human resources through training and community participation is key to sustainable tourism.
8	Jayvee Delos Santos et al. (2024). Formulating Boracay's Blue Economy Framework	Integrating the principles of sustainable development and community education into the blue economy framework.	Community involvement and education improve governance and human resource capacity in tourism.
9	Khalaf Al Bahri & Aza Md Kassim (2025). Human Capital Investment as a Strategic Lever for Sustainable Tourism	Analysing human capital investment in supporting sustainable tourism in Oman	Local skills development and education drive the competitiveness of blue economy-based tourism.
10	Liping Zhu & Yadong Zhou (2023). <i>Coupling of Island Tourism Carbon Emission and Sustainable Resource Development</i>	Analysing the relationship between carbon emissions and sustainable resource development on tourist islands.	Energy efficiency and environmental management need to be supported by green-oriented HRM..

No	Author Name, year, Research Title	Research Objective	Key Findings / Implications
11	Isye Susana Nurhasanah & P. Van den Broeck (2022). <i>Towards a Sustainable Metamorphosis of a Small Island Tourism</i>	Exploring governance changes and capacity building on small islands.	Ongoing training and local participation form the foundation for sustainable tourism transformation.
12	Taufiq Urohman et al. (2024). <i>Sustainable Human Resource Development Strategy to Support the Blue Economy Tourism Area on Mengare Island</i>	Designing sustainable human resource development strategies for blue economy zones.	Capacity building and sustainable education support the competitiveness of marine-based tourism.
13	Tom Baum (2012). <i>Human Resource Management in Tourism: A Small Island Perspective</i>	Examining the role of HRM in small island tourism.	Adaptive HRM is needed to overcome labour constraints and enhance destination sustainability.
14	Afriani Ginanjar & Ade Adriyadi (2024). <i>Optimization of Human Resources to Support Blue Economy in Riau Island Province</i>	Optimising the role of human resources in developing the blue economy of coastal regions.	Strengthening community-based training and policies enhances the sustainability of the maritime economy.
15	K. Keerthi Jain (2025). <i>Integrating Sustainability Principles Into Human Resource Management</i>	Developing an integrative HRM framework based on sustainability principles.	The integration of green HRM strengthens the company's orientation towards long-term sustainability.
16	Aishath Shakeela et al. (2012). <i>Human Resource Policies: Striving for</i>	Analysing HRM policies for sustainable tourism in the Maldives	Sustainable HRM policies improve the performance of blue economy-based destinations.

No	Author Name, year, Research Title	Research Objective	Key Findings / Implications
	<i>Sustainable Tourism Outcomes in the Maldives</i>		
17	Afriani Ginanjar & Ade Adriyadi (2024). <i>Optimization of Human Resources to Support Blue Economy in Riau Island Province</i>	Assessing the role of HRM in strengthening the blue economy in island regions	Strategic HRM strengthens community capabilities in the marine and tourism sectors.
18	Iranita et al. (2024). <i>The Role of Social Media, Tourism Facilities, and Blue Economy in Promoting Sustainable Marine Tourism</i>	Identifying factors that support sustainable marine tourism on Benan Island.	Adaptive and trained human resources enhance the promotion of marine tourism through the blue economy.
19	Diyan Putranto et al. (2025). <i>Enhancing Human Resource Quality and Strengthening Strategies for Tourism Development in East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia</i>	Developing strategies to improve the quality of regional tourism human resources	Training and local empowerment strengthen the competitiveness and resilience of the tourism sector.
20	Asad Abbas (2022). <i>Human Resources Management for Sustainable Sea Tourism</i>	Explaining the role of HRM in managing sustainable marine tourism.	HRM plays an important role in managing the workforce to support conservation and a sustainable marine economy.

4. DISCUSSION

The integration of human resource management (HRM) in the context of sustainable tourism in the blue economy is a strategic factor that determines the success of small island destination development. The research question in this study centers on how HRM practices

and policies can strengthen the principles of the blue economy, increase the capacity of the local workforce, and ensure social and environmental sustainability in the tourism sector. The literature indicates that human resource management, integrated with sustainability values, can balance economic needs with marine ecosystem conservation (Baum & Cooper, 2006; Urohman et al., 2024). However, to date, there remains a conceptual and empirical gap in understanding the extent to which green HRM practices and community-based training policies can be synergised to strengthen sustainable tourism on small islands.

The main issue identified in the literature is the low level of local community involvement in the planning and implementation of sustainable tourism policies grounded in the blue economy. In this context, HRM acts as a bridge between economic and ecological goals through practices such as green recruitment, local wisdom-based training, and competency development that supports marine resource conservation (Rosid et al., 2025; Sitohang et al., 2024). Thus, this study focuses on analysing the strategic role of HRM in strengthening human resource management in small-island tourism destinations, particularly how HR development policies can drive innovation and competitiveness in the sustainable tourism sector within the blue economy framework.

Human Resource Management (HRM) practices play a central role in supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Blue Economy in the small-island tourism sector, as they are the primary driver of human and local institutional capacity development. According to Baum and Cooper (2006), HRM strategies that are adapted to the coastal environmental context can balance economic goals with marine ecosystem conservation, particularly through training and recruitment policies that emphasise ecological responsibility. This is reinforced by Sitohang et al. (2024), who found that the application of green HRM in the coastal tourism sector increases workers' environmental awareness and strengthens their commitment to sustainable practices. Thus, HRM not only functions as a labour manager but also as an agent of change in internalising sustainability values throughout the tourism business chain.

Human resource management practices within the blue economy framework play an important role in building local community competencies through training based on local wisdom and skills development that supports marine resource conservation. Urohman et al. (2024) emphasise that empowering local communities through a participatory approach can foster more inclusive economic resilience in small-island tourism destinations. This approach is relevant to the principles of the Sustainable Blue Economy, which emphasises synergy

between economic development, social welfare, and marine ecosystem protection. Through holistic human resource management, the tourism sector can promote local economic diversification without compromising the sustainability of natural resources. Thus, strengthening human capacity is key to creating tourism that is adaptive to global challenges such as climate change and marine degradation.

The results of Rosid et al.'s (2025) research show that integrating HRM with organisational sustainability policies can increase the competitiveness of tourist destinations and strengthen the position of the tourism sector within the national blue economy framework. The implementation of practices such as sustainable leadership, green competency management, and performance-based environmental incentives has proven effective in building a work culture oriented towards sustainability. This approach not only strengthens individual commitment to the environment but also creates social innovation that supports a balance between economic exploitation and marine resource conservation. Thus, HRM practices in the small-island tourism sector can be seen as a strategic foundation for implementing a fair and sustainable Blue Economy.

The implementation of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) contributes significantly to social, economic, and environmental sustainability in island tourism destinations. According to Sitohang et al. (2024), GHRM encompasses recruitment, training, performance appraisal, and reward systems oriented toward environmentally friendly values. These practices help build employees' ecological awareness and reinforce pro-environmental behaviour in tourism operations. In the context of island destinations, the application of GHRM not only helps reduce environmental impacts, such as marine pollution and tourism waste, but also promotes sustainable resource efficiency through innovation and corporate social responsibility. Thus, GHRM serves as a strategic mechanism to ensure that tourism economic growth remains in line with environmental sustainability and the welfare of local communities.

From a social and economic perspective, GHRM plays an important role in building harmonious relationships between tourism stakeholders, local communities, and local governments. Urohman et al. (2024) emphasise that community-based training and the empowerment of local workers, integrated with sustainability values, can improve social inclusion and economic resilience in island communities. By involving communities in recruitment and decision-making processes, GHRM strengthens ownership of local resources and increases opportunities for fair and sustainable employment. This practice aligns with the

principles of the Sustainable Blue Economy, which prioritises a balance between economic development and marine ecosystem conservation. As a result, tourism destinations that implement GHRM tend to be more adaptive to global challenges, such as climate change and pressure on marine biodiversity.

From an environmental perspective, the implementation of GHRM strengthens the ecological responsibility of tourism organisations through internal sustainability-based policies. Baum and Cooper (2006) explain that environmentally conscious workforce management encourages green innovation and ecosystem-friendly practices, such as waste management, energy conservation, and the involvement of tourists in nature conservation activities. Rosid et al. (2025) add that integrating GHRM into destination management strategies can enhance the global reputation and competitiveness of tourism, as tourists now prefer destinations that implement green practices. Therefore, GHRM is not merely a managerial approach, but an important instrument in building a sustainable, inclusive, and resilient island tourism system that can withstand long-term socio-ecological dynamics.

Local cultural factors play a fundamental role in the effectiveness of blue economy implementation in the tourism sector, as local wisdom values underpin community behaviour and patterns of interaction with the marine environment. Urohman et al. (2024) emphasise that the involvement of local communities in coastal resource management strengthens social legitimacy and enhances the sustainability of blue economy-based tourism policies. In the context of archipelagos, local cultures that uphold the values of mutual cooperation, ecosystem balance, and a sense of ownership of the marine environment are determinants of the success of conservation and economic diversification programmes. Therefore, integrating local culture into tourism management practices not only strengthens a destination's identity but also ensures that economic development does not overlook social and ecological sustainability.

In addition to local culture, sustainable leadership and workforce capacity building are strategic elements that determine the effectiveness of blue economy implementation. According to Rosid et al. (2025), sustainable leadership can encourage green innovation, cross-sector collaboration, and ethical environmental decision-making in the tourism industry. This aligns with the findings of Sitohang et al. (2024), who show that GHRM-based training improves workforce competence in implementing environmentally friendly practices and increases economic productivity without harming the ecosystem. Thus, the combination of sustainable leadership, preservation of local culture, and human resource capacity building

forms a strategic foundation for the effective, adaptive, and inclusive implementation of the blue economy in the island tourism sector.

The most relevant Human Resource Management (HRM) strategy to strengthen the competitiveness of blue economy-based tourism in the Indonesian archipelago is one that integrates Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) with a community-based sustainable development approach. GHRM plays an important role in ensuring that every stage of HR management, from recruitment and training to performance evaluation, prioritises environmental and social sustainability values. Rosid et al. (2025) emphasise that green recruitment and marine conservation-based training strategies can increase ecological awareness and develop a workforce that is adaptive to the needs of the blue tourism industry. These findings are in line with Baum and Cooper (2006), who highlight the importance of cross-sector collaboration, especially between local governments, industry players, and small island communities, in building workforce capacity to manage marine resources productively and sustainably. Thus, GHRM is not only a conventional HR strategy but also a policy instrument for strengthening tourism competitiveness by improving the quality of environmentally oriented human resources.

In addition, effective HRM strategies should include sustainable leadership development and green, performance-based incentive systems to strengthen the organisation's commitment to blue economy principles. Sitohang et al. (2024) found that leadership that instills sustainability values can motivate employees to innovate in the application of environmentally friendly practices in the coastal tourism sector. Urohman et al. (2024) also showed that participatory training and capacity building for local communities can increase community involvement in preserving marine ecosystems, thereby directly affecting the attractiveness and competitive advantage of destinations. Therefore, HRM strategies that combine GHRM principles, sustainable leadership, and local empowerment are the most relevant approach for strengthening the position of Indonesian island tourism within the global blue economy, which emphasises a balance among economic growth, resource conservation, and social welfare.

5. CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the integration of sustainability-oriented Human Resource Management (HRM) is a strategic element in strengthening the implementation of the Sustainable Blue Economy in the tourism sector of small islands. Based on the results of the

literature review, it can be concluded that Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices including green recruitment, environment-based training, and sustainability-focused reward systems can increase ecological awareness and labour productivity. This directly affects the balance among economic growth, environmental sustainability, and the social welfare of island communities. Furthermore, strengthening local capacity through education, training, and community empowerment is a key factor in creating inclusive tourism that is adaptive to global challenges such as climate change and marine resource degradation

Furthermore, this study shows that local cultural factors and sustainable leadership play an important role in determining the effectiveness of blue economy implementation. The integration of cultural values into HRM policies strengthens the identity of tourist destinations, increases community ownership of the environment, and expands social participation in tourism management. Sustainability-oriented leadership has proven capable of fostering innovation, cross-sector collaboration, and ethical governance in the development of marine-based tourism industries. Thus, the most relevant HRM strategy for Indonesia's archipelagic regions is one that integrates the principles of GHRM, sustainable leadership, and local community empowerment to develop highly competitive tourism that is socially, economically, and ecologically sustainable.

Based on the analysis and conclusions, several recommendations can serve as a reference for further policy development and research. First, local governments and tourism industry stakeholders need to strengthen the implementation of GHRM through measurable policies, such as green training programmes, environmentally oriented recruitment, and incentive systems for workers who contribute to environmentally friendly practices. Second, there needs to be cross-sector collaboration among the government, educational institutions, and local communities to design a blue tourism training curriculum oriented toward sustainable development. Third, further research is recommended to take an empirical approach through field studies in island destinations in Indonesia, in order to directly measure the impact of HRM strategy implementation on the blue economy and socio-ecological sustainability indicators. By implementing HRM strategies grounded in green values and local wisdom, tourism in the Indonesian archipelago can evolve into a blue economy model that not only improves community welfare but also preserves the marine environment for future generations.

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