

## Designing Creative Economy through Community-based Ecotourism: A Case Study of Youtefa Bay Park, Jayapura, Indonesia

Akhmad Kadir,<sup>1\*</sup> Pawennari Hijjang,<sup>2</sup> Fredrik Sokoy,<sup>1</sup> Matias Benoni Mano<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Cenderawasih, Jayapura – Indonesia; <sup>2</sup>Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Hasanuddin, Makassar – Indonesia; <sup>3</sup>Doctoral Program in Social Sciences, Universitas Cenderawasih, Jayapura – Indonesia

### Abstract

Efforts to enhance a creative economy via community-based ecotourism are vital for regional development. Using a qualitative method, this study examines the state of ecotourism, indigenous community involvement, and the challenges faced in fostering creative economy practices in Youtefa Bay Park. The findings highlight the area's potential to boost the local economy through ecotourism that integrates indigenous knowledge, exploiting its natural beauty, cultural assets, and historical heritage. Collaborative management involving the government, private sector, and local communities is essential for sustainable growth. The study emphasizes the need for local regulations and initiatives to increase regional income and development, demonstrating ecotourism's role as a driver for economic and cultural preservation in Papua. The collaborative model in tourism management with recognition of customary assets in Youtefa Bay has become an urgent demand for the government to establish a blueprint for inclusive and community rights-based ecotourism development policies within the framework of special autonomy.

Upaya untuk meningkatkan ekonomi kreatif melalui ekowisata berbasis komunitas sangat penting bagi pengembangan regional. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif, studi ini menganalisis kondisi ekowisata, keterlibatan komunitas asli, dan tantangan yang dihadapi dalam mengembangkan praktik ekonomi kreatif di Taman Teluk Youtefa. Temuan studi menyoroti potensi wilayah ini untuk meningkatkan ekonomi lokal melalui ekowisata yang mengintegrasikan pengetahuan asli, memanfaatkan keindahan alam, aset budaya, dan warisan sejarah. Pengelolaan kolaboratif yang melibatkan pemerintah, sektor swasta, dan komunitas lokal sangat penting untuk pertumbuhan berkelanjutan. Studi ini menekankan perlunya regulasi dan inisiatif lokal untuk meningkatkan pendapatan dan pembangunan regional, menunjukkan peran ekowisata sebagai pendorong pelestarian ekonomi dan budaya di Papua. Model kolaboratif dalam pengelolaan wisata dengan pengakuan aset adat di Teluk Youtefa ini menjadi desakan kat bagi Pemerintah untuk menetapkan blue-print bagi kebijakan pembangunan ekowisaya yang inklusif dan berbasis hak komunitas dalam kerangka otonomi khusus.

**Keywords:** conservation; creative economy; ecotourism; Youtefa Bay; Jayapura; Papua

\*Corresponding Author: Akhmad Kadir (akhmad.kadir@fisip.uncen.ac.id), Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Cenderawasih, Kampus Baru, Jl. Kamp Wolker Waena, Jayapura, Papua 99351, Indonesia.

## Introduction

The creative economy encompasses sectors related to the creation, production, and distribution of goods and services tied to intellectual and cultural property. These include industries such as art, design, film, music, advertising, and technology, which rely on individual creativity and cultural skills. The foundation of the creative economy lies in human abilities and skills (Toffler 1984), and a well-developed creative economy sector has a significant impact on social life. High-quality human resources are essential for fostering creativity and innovation, enabling the local potential to be managed in line with the principles of the creative economy (Isar 2013; Peters 2004). Such community-driven innovation and creativity can accelerate economic development and enhance business competitiveness (DeNatale and Wassall 2006).

To ensure long-term success, the creative economy must remain focused on the cultural elements of the community, encouraging business growth while simultaneously improving social welfare (Florida 2005; Hamilton, Arbic, and Baeker 2009; Higgs and Cunningham 2008). By incorporating the cultural aspects of local communities, the creative economy not only fosters economic opportunities but also helps sustain the environment and preserve the unique cultures of indigenous groups. In the context of regional tourism, indigenous tourism aligns with the “4H” concept: habitat, history, handicrafts, and heritage (Amerta 2019; Borseková and Vitálišová 2024; Pratt, Gibson, and Movono 2013). The ecotourism area in Youtefa Bay embodies all four of these components, making it an attractive and holistic tourist destination that supports the development of the local creative economy. A previous study in Indonesia has shown that ecotourism plays a significant role in the creative economy by fostering sustainable

development, promoting cultural preservation, and driving innovation in tourism experiences. It catalyzes integrating local wisdom, cultural events, and creative industries into the tourism sector, enhancing the economic value of rural communities (Wibowo et al. 2023).

Since ecotourism can deliver financial benefits to local communities while considering social and environmental aspects (Putri et al. 2022), the optimization of ecotourism development in this area is crucial. In doing so, it is essential to involve the pentahelix elements, which encompass collaboration among government, academia, the private sector, the community, and the media (Lasaiba 2022). Active community involvement in resource management and tourism development is essential for success (Muhali, Asy'ari, and Sukaisih 2021), because as the key factors in tourism development include natural resources, community participation, and the interests of tourists (Lasaiba 2022). In this context, local communities play a key role in utilizing natural resources, and the development of the creative economy further strengthens this role. Therefore, ecotourism not only promotes environmental and cultural sustainability (Mohanty et al. 2024) but also provides economic benefits to indigenous communities.

Various studies highlight that the development of ecotourism serves as an alternative pathway for boosting local economies and creative industries across different regions. Ecotourism that integrates conservation and environmental sustainability has been shown to empower communities (Chang, Lin, and Chuang 2021). Likewise, research by Mustaqim (2018) and Mulyowati and Shanti (2016) demonstrates that ecotourism and creative economy development are effective foundations for community empowerment. These initiatives, particularly those centered on the creative economy, enable

local communities to develop sustainable practices that benefit both the environment and the people (Mulyowati and Shanti 2016). Similarly, Kesuma (2016) reveals that ecotourism and community-based creative economies create job opportunities by offering services like homestays, tour guides, and handicraft sales. These activities have a significant impact on poverty reduction, achieved through policy development and community mentoring (Alam, Alam, and Alimuddin 2023).

Past research has shown that the involvement of traditional villages and communities is vital in developing sustainable tourism. They serve as living repositories of traditional knowledge, practices, and customs, offering tourists authentic cultural experiences (Chen and Li 2022; Nugraha and Lema 2021). For example, activities such as traditional ceremonies, dances, and crafts can be incorporated into tourism offerings, providing visitors with immersive cultural experiences while supporting the continuation of local traditions (Katelieva and Muhar 2022; Nugraha and Lema 2021). This approach not only benefits tourists but also helps in safeguarding and revitalizing intangible cultural heritage and cultural landscapes in a sustainable manner (Katelieva and Muhar 2022). In this case, stakeholder engagement, benefit-sharing mechanisms, and effective cultural interpretation are some of the

critical success factors (Vitasurya, Hardiman, and Ratih Sari 2018).

This study is part of a basic research scheme that aims to explore the development of ecotourism and the enhancement of the creative economy among indigenous communities in the Youtefa Bay. The research examines explicitly how ecotourism can serve as a tool to stimulate the creative economy in indigenous communities, particularly within conservation areas. This study is crucial for informing inclusive and sustainable development policies in Papua.

A qualitative method was employed to gain a deeper understanding of the perceptions, experiences, and views of indigenous communities regarding ecotourism and the creative economy. The research adopts a case study approach, focusing on Youtefa Bay as the primary location. This design allows for an in-depth exploration of specific phenomena within real-world contexts, taking into account the area's unique social, cultural, and environmental dynamics.

Informants for this study were selected purposively, involving indigenous community leaders, stakeholders, and residents who actively participate in ecotourism and creative economy activities (see Table 1). The selection was based on their knowledge of the subject and their role in the community.

Table 1  
Research Informat

No.	Name	Position	Gender
1	Mr. MBM	Tourism Office Official	Male
2	MR. Y B	Tourism Office Official	Male
3	MR. JD	Traditional Village Leader	Male
4	Mrs E.M	Women Community Leader	Female
5	Mrs. R.S.	Indigenous Community Member	Female
6	MR. HP	Indigenous Community Member	Male
7	Miss. Hrp	Environmental Activist	Female

Source: Primary Data

Data were gathered through in-depth interviews, which involved direct interaction between researchers and informants, to explore their experiences, opinions, and perspectives on the development of ecotourism and the creative economy. Interviews were conducted with tourist guides, business actors, and indigenous beneficiaries of ecotourism.

To further enrich the data, we adopted an urban ethnography approach, particularly urban walking or urban tour ethnography (Pink 2008). It involved observing several villages within the Youtefa Bay area, namely Nafri, Enggros, Tobati, and Skow. Unlike typical observational walks, this method engaged all our senses to observe, record, and photograph relevant activities, offering a holistic view of ecotourism as a socially, culturally, and economically regulated landscape. As part of this ethnographic approach, we immersed ourselves in daily life at key tourism destinations, using the principle of “insight-stimulating” observation, which allowed us to explore and seek new insights throughout the research process freely.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were also conducted to align and refine the meanings and perceptions among group members relevant to the research topic. The FGDs further deepened the analysis by drawing on collective views and experiences. The data collected were analyzed using sociocultural theory and creative economy theory to examine how social and cultural interactions influence the development of the creative economy within the ecotourism context. Sustainability and ecosystem balance were also considered when analyzing conservation area management. This comprehensive approach aims to generate insights into the contribution of ecotourism to the creative economy of the indigenous communities in Youtefa Bay, providing a foundation for formulating more effective and sustainable policies.

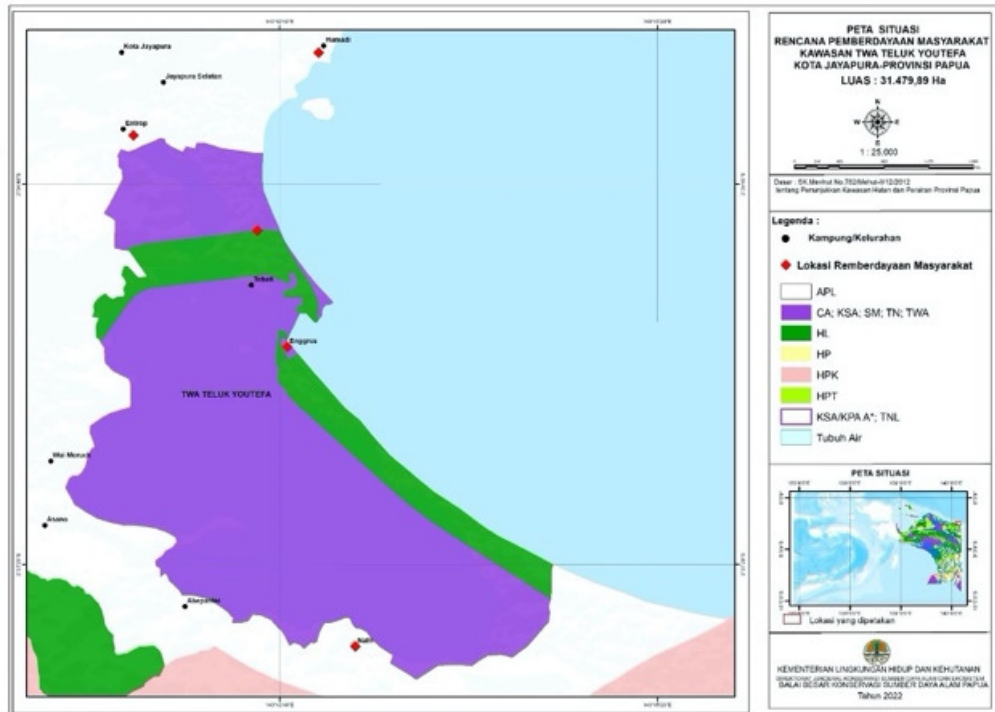
Considering the background above, this study examines how local wisdom and community participation can be harnessed for sustainable development. It explores the potential of Jayapura’s indigenous communities in eco-tourism, as well as strategies for integrating the creative economy. The primary research problem focuses on understanding the inter-section between ecotourism, indigenous cultural preservation, and economic development. Key research questions include: What is the condition and the potential of Youtefa Bay’s ecotourism? What are the efforts underway to develop a creative economy based on ecotourism, and what are the hopes and challenges associated with implementing a creative economy to ensure sustainable growth?

### **The Condition and Potentials of Youtefa Bay’s Ecotourism**

According to the 2023 data from the Jayapura City Tourism Office, Yutefa Bay is a small bay located within Yos Sudarso Bay in Jayapura City. The Youtefa Bay area is a conservation area designated as a 1,675-hectare nature tourism park. The Youtefa Bay Tourism Park is flanked by two promontory capes on the left, Tanjung Pie and Tanjung Saweri, on the right, separated by a small strait approximately 300 meters wide, called the Tobati Strait, which serves as the entrance and exit to Youtefa Bay from the sea (Figure 1) (Admin Jerat Papua 2015; Salusu 2023).

Youtefa Bay is located about five kilometers from the city center of Jayapura. The region has immense potential in the tourism and creative economy sectors. Its natural landscape, the indigenous community living in that area with the specific cultural color, and the historical aspect of the region make it a capital for tourism destinations.

Figure 1  
Map of Youtefa Bay



Source: BBKSDA Papua, 2024

Figure 2  
Natural Landscape of Youtefa Bay



Source: Profil Pariwisata Kota Jayapura 2023

While protected areas can attract tourists and generate economic benefits for local communities, they may also create conflicts with traditional land uses and limit access for local populations (Puhakka et al. 2009). Additionally, the effectiveness of environmental policies in promoting sustainable tourism can vary depending on factors such as institutional arrangements, self-regulation, environmental awareness, and partnerships among stakeholders (Hiwasaki 2006). Research underscores the importance of involving traditional villages and communities in sustainable tourism, as they preserve traditional practices and offer authentic cultural experiences (Chen and Li 2022; Nugraha and Lema 2021). This approach benefits tourists and helps safeguard intangible heritage sustainably (Katelieva and Muhar 2022).

The natural landscape of Youtefa Bay features scenic, pristine beaches, surrounded by mountains, a vibrant seabed, rich marine life, and tropical rainforests (Figure 2). The nature supports a wide range of tourism activities,

including snorkeling, diving, hiking, and biodiversity exploration. Mangrove forests, which are dense throughout the area, not only enhance its scenic beauty but also embody rich local knowledge. These mangroves play a crucial role in maintaining coastal ecosystems, providing habitats for a diverse array of fauna, and protecting the shoreline from erosion. Past research has also demonstrated that mangrove forests possess significant potential for ecotourism development, providing both ecological and economic benefits to coastal communities (Henri and Ardiawati 2020).

Youtefa Bay Nature Tourism Park is characterized by its flat to undulating lowland terrain, with elevations ranging from 0 to 73 meters above sea level. Among its notable features is the Red Bridge, a recent addition to the region's tourism infrastructure. According to the Jayapura City Outlook 2018 document, the Youtefa Red Bridge spans 732 meters, connecting the Jayapura and Muara Tami districts (Figure 3).

Figure 3  
Red Bridge in Youtefa Bay



Source: Jayapura City Tourism Profile 2023

This bridge not only serves as a crucial link between the two areas but also stands as a significant tourist attraction. From its vantage point, visitors can enjoy panoramic views of Youtefa Bay. Moreover, the Red Bridge holds historical and symbolic importance, representing national unity and progress in Papua. It is a popular landmark in Jayapura City, where it functions as a suspension bridge over the river, linking the city center with its surrounding areas.

Another point is that the region is home to preserved traditional villages in the Youtefa Bay Nature Tourism Park, such as those of the Tobati, Enggros, Kayu Pulo, Kayu Batu, and Nafri tribes. Despite the pressures of modernization, migration, and government-led development, these villages have maintained their cultural identity and uniqueness, which has helped them evolve into cultural tourism destinations.

With the enactment of the Papua Special Autonomy Law in 2021, the recognition and role of these indigenous peoples have been significantly strengthened. The law provides a more inclusive framework, enabling indigenous communities to have greater influence in decision-making processes related to natural resource management, development policies, and cultural preservation. This recognition extends to customary land rights, protection of cultural heritage, and active participation in local governance. The law seeks to ensure that development in Jayapura is balanced, promoting not only economic growth but also environmental sustainability and the welfare of indigenous peoples.

The villages within the Youtefa Bay are not only renowned for their stunning and exotic landscapes but also play a crucial role in the local community's livelihood. To ensure ecological sustainability and support indigenous communities, this area has been designated as a

conservation zone under the management of the Papua Natural Resources Conservation Center (*Balai Besar Konservasi Sumber Daya – BBKSDA*). This designation was initially established by the Decree of the Minister of Agriculture No. 372/KPTS/Um/6/1978, dated June 9, 1978. Subsequently, in 1996, the legal status of Youtefa Bay was reinforced with the Decree of the Minister of Forestry of the Republic of Indonesia No. 714/KPTS-II/1996, dated November 11, 1996, which formally recognized the area as a Conservation Area designated as a Nature Tourism Park, encompassing 1,657 hectares.

By empowering indigenous communities to preserve and develop their local wisdom, the Special Autonomy Law opens avenues for integrating government policies with traditional practices. These practices have long proven effective in managing ecosystems and natural resources sustainably. Through a holistic, participatory approach, Papua's development can progress while simultaneously preserving its rich cultural identity and improving the quality of life for its indigenous peoples.

Historically, Jayapura City is an important city in the context of the relationship between Papua and Indonesia. This city was established around 1910 by Infantry Captain F.J.P. Sachs under the name Hollandia. The city's name was changed to Sukarnapura in 1964, after Irian Jaya became part of Indonesia, and Jayapura in 1968. The name "Jayapura" is derived from Sanskrit, where "Jaya" means victory and "Pura" means city, collectively signifying the City of Victory. Beyond its historical significance, Jayapura is renowned for its diverse and exotic tourist destinations, which are well worth exploring.

There are some buildings that have witnessed several key events during World War II. The area still preserves various historical sites, adding an educational dimension to the tourism



experience, making it a destination rich in both natural beauty and historical value. The bay holds significant historical importance, featuring remnants from World War II, such as shipwrecks and destroyers. These historical artifacts contribute to the scientific and educational value of the area, enriching the understanding of Papua's historical context. Some important tourist attractions that have historical significance in the Jayapura area can be combined with the natural tourism of Youtefa Bay. Some of these historical tourist attractions include the Pepera Monument, the Yos Sudarso Monument, the Allied Landing Monument, and the Pancasila Monument (in Skow) (Figure 4).

Jayapura City is distinguished by its rich cultural heritage, which is prominently reflected in the traditional community institutions

preserved across generations. These traditional governance structures are not merely relics of local wisdom but serve as essential pillars in the lives of Indigenous Papuans (*Orang Asli Papua* - OAP).

The recognition and continued function of the LMA underscore a form of cultural resistance against the encroaching influence of modern political and economic systems, which often overlook local characteristics. The LMA exemplifies how indigenous communities can adapt while maintaining their cultural essence through established social mechanisms. Thus, it not only contributes to social stability but also affirms that, amid urban development, the enduring cultural roots of the OAP continue to guide and enrich community life.

Figure 4  
Pepera Monument, Historical Building in Jayapura



Source: Jayapura City Tourism Profile 2023



Article 38, paragraph (2) of the Papua Special Autonomy Law underscores that economic activities utilizing natural resources in Papua must respect the rights of indigenous peoples, ensure legal certainty for entrepreneurs, and promote sustainable development, with regulations set by special regional regulations (*Peraturan Daerah Khusus – PERDASUS*) (Deda and Mofu 2014).

The discourse around Indigenous Law Communities (*Masyarakat Hukum Adat - MHA*), OAP, and indigenous people in general gained prominence following the International Labor Organization's (ILO) adoption of Convention No. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries in 1989 (Muazzin, 2014). Subsequently, the World Bank and various developing nations, including Indonesia, began integrating indigenous peoples into their development policies. In Papua, the concept of MHA has been recognized since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, categorized by van Vollenhoven as one of 19 customary law circles in Indonesia. This recognition was further solidified with the enactment of Law No. 21 of 2001 concerning Special Autonomy for Papua. According to Chapter 1, Article 1 of this law, MHA refers to indigenous Papuans who have lived in a specific area from birth, bound by customary laws and united by a strong sense of solidarity.

MHA, or Customary Law Communities, are often viewed as self-sufficient community units characterized by legal cohesion, territorial unity, and shared rights to land and water among their members. A structured social order, settlement in a defined area, a clear authority structure, communal ownership of both tangible and intangible assets, and a unified legal system are characteristic of them. Maria Sumardjono, Professor of Agrarian Law at Gadjah Mada University (UGM), further defines MHA as communities that emerge organically in specific

areas, exhibiting strong internal solidarity and viewing outsiders as foreign. Their territory is seen as a resource accessible only to members, with any external use requiring permission and recognition (Deda et al., 2014). While these traditional communities hold significant potential, they also face social challenges, such as conflicts over "property rights" and customary rights management. In Jayapura City, customary rights often supersede formal legal frameworks in resolving issues related to public spaces. This preference can lead to complex and dilemma-ridden situations in the development context, reflecting the intricate interplay between traditional and modern legal systems

### **Efforts for Designing Local Communities Participation in the Creative Economy**

The development of the creative economy in the nature tourism destination of Youtefa Bay is outlined in the 2022 Jayapura Creative Economy Master Plan (Pemerintah Kota Jayapura 2022). Related to this point, Mr. MBM, as a tourist office official, stated:

"Discussing the development of the creative economy in Youtefa Bay, we find there are internal and external issues that persist. Internally, the management of the creative economy is still underdeveloped in terms of supporting tourism growth. A clear vision and mission are crucial for the Jayapura City Tourism Office to strengthen its planning. Furthermore, the creative economy can enrich the tourist experience by offering unique and diverse activities. To maximize the mutual benefits between tourism and the creative economy, it is essential for local governments and business actors to collaborate, thereby promoting sustainable economic growth. This collaboration also strengthens the local economy by creating jobs and supporting new business opportunities. Efforts have been made to achieve these goals."

According to the 2018 Jayapura City Outlook (2018), ecotourism management in the city prioritizes simplicity and the preservation of nature, culture, and community life. As stated by Mr. YB, a tourist office official:

“The focus is on maintaining the authenticity of the environment, local arts, culture, customs, and traditions while fostering a peaceful and close relationship with the natural world. It implied the harmony between the government, the local community, the environment, as well as business.”

Based on the statements above, the attempt to enhance local participation is through several ways. The first is the availability of regulations to support local community participation in the creative economy along the ecotourism corridor. Special Regional Regulation (Peraturan Daerah Khusus- PRDASUS) (Deda and Mofu 2014) that contained Papua Special Autonomy Law underscores that economic activities utilizing natural resources in Papua must respect the rights of indigenous peoples, ensure legal certainty for entrepreneurs, and promote sustainable development.

Another regulation to support the Jayapura City Creative Economy Strategic Area is crucial to the city's spatial planning, as it prioritizes the development of the creative economy. This area has the potential to drive economic, social, and cultural growth while harnessing natural resources and promoting environmental sustainability. Miss Hrp stated:

“While ecotourism promotes access to natural resources, it presents a paradox. It exploits nature for tourism, yet it also depends on its preservation. So the effort of the local government to state the protected area is a positive point to support ecotourism, the local community, and businesses in the Jayapura surroundings.”

This dynamic has led to the implementation of environmental policies, such as creating

protected areas (Kent 2003). Protected areas serve as major attractions for nature-based tourism, offering visitors opportunities to experience unique natural and cultural resources (Pedersen and Ceballos-Lascurain 2019; Silva, Silva, and Vieira 2023). The establishment of national parks and other protected areas has led to the growth of ecotourism and sustainable tourism practices, which are among the fastest-growing segments of the tourism industry (Silva et al. 2023; Suta, Hrnjic, and Banda 2017). These areas often implement specific management strategies, such as carrying capacity assessments, zoning, and codes of ethics, to minimize negative impacts on the environment while maximizing visitor experiences (Miljkovic and Zivkovic 2012).

The protected area becomes increasingly crucial for local communities in remote areas with pristine natural environments (Sørensen, Jensen, and Grindsted 2025). Effective management of such tourism requires collaboration among all stakeholders within the indigenous community, as community-based ecotourism (CBET) plays a key role in environmental conservation (Mohanty et al. 2024). The integration of ecotourism management with creative economy development can create opportunities for broader participation from various societal groups, including those in decision-making processes and policy formulation.

In the case of Youtefa Bay, CBET presents a promising approach to achieving sustainable development in ecotourism destinations while involving indigenous peoples in Jayapura City. Studies have highlighted that CBET can enhance the economic structure of communities, safeguard ecological resources, preserve traditional culture, and boost environmental awareness among residents (Zhuang and Liu 2010). By integrating the creative economy with

ecotourism, communities can benefit from urban branding, innovative industrial centers, and renewable resource development, fostering a symbiotic relationship between environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and economic advancement (Agustina et al. 2020; Thomas 2022). This integration not only generates funds for conservation but also delivers socioeconomic benefits to local communities, potentially improving their social quality and well-being (Day et al. 2021; K. C., Rijal, and Sapkota 2015; Wibowo et al. 2023).

However, despite the potential benefits of CBET and the creative economy, Jayapura City faces significant challenges in realizing these opportunities. The city government's efforts to accelerate tourism development through the creative industry sector, as outlined in Jayapura City Regional Regulation Number 11 of 2019, face obstacles that need to be addressed. Key issues include governance problems related to tourism, especially concerning customary rights and property issues, which complicate tourism planning and development. Additionally, inadequate infrastructure for creative economy actors limits their growth and advancement. Limited investment and capital further hinder the expansion of businesses, and the absence of a cohesive creative economy business ecosystem prevents the effective synergy among the 17 existing subsectors.

The existing regulation must be accompanied by the effort to enhance community participation, support the public sector, and facilitate the development of small-scale indigenous tourism projects in less developed areas (Briedenhann and Wickens 2004; Sururi 2017, 2019). The challenge is to regulate policies and governance based on power relations among the government, private sector, and the public (indigenous communities). Disharmony among these stakeholders can hinder the success of

tourism initiatives. Therefore, regulations and policies must delineate the roles of each party in managing tourist destinations, thereby fostering an inclusive, creative economy based on indigenous communities in Jayapura City. Agreements among the government, business sector, and indigenous communities must be formalized in local regulations, such as a *Perwali* (Mayor's Regulation) or *Perda* (Regional Regulation), to manage ecotourism effectively.

Lastly, tourism practices must be deeply rooted in the cultural context of local communities. Issues often arise in tourism that are closely tied to cultural elements, which play a crucial role in understanding and preserving human behavior and interactions. In this context, culture encompasses the symbols and practices learned within a community, which help sustain human existence. While cultural elements manifest through observable behaviors, activities, and their outcomes, the underlying knowledge guiding these behaviors remains less visible. Tourism is inherently linked to human culture and social life, with every society engaging in tourism in ways that reflect its unique interactions with the outside world and its efforts to preserve cultural heritage.

However, this approach presents challenges. The development of cultural tourism can create a paradox: tourists seek authentic experiences, while communities aim to actively participate in tourism and leverage their traditions as economic resources (Putra, Adhika, and Yana 2021). This dynamic can lead to the commodification of local culture, transforming traditional practices and vernacular architecture into marketable attractions (Craik 1995; Putra et al. 2021). To navigate this challenge, it is essential to involve local communities in defining their own objectives for tourism development, ensuring that tourist demands are met without undermining traditional values (Putra et al. 2021).

In Jayapura City, the government views the ecotourism program as a strategy to optimize and preserve sustainable income sources. By emphasizing environmental sustainability and improving local community welfare, the program supports indigenous peoples in enhancing their income through effective ecotourism management while maintaining the ecological balance of Youtefa Bay.

### **Challenges of Implementing the Creative Economy in Youtefa Bay**

Tourism supported by the creative economy is a critical driver of locally generated revenue (*Pendapatan Asli Daerah* - PAD) in Jayapura City, as said by informant Mrs RS, a woman leader:

“It generates revenue and creates employment opportunities, and fosters the growth of related industries, such as hospitality, culinary arts, transportation, and handicrafts. Consequently, tourism in Jayapura City has the potential to stimulate economic growth and deliver broad benefits to the local community through the creative economy. In the context of the global economy, characterized by expanded access to information and technology, the creative economy has emerged as a pivotal driver of inclusive economic development.”

The creative economy, which emphasizes innovation and creativity, plays a crucial role in achieving prosperity by harnessing individual creative potential within the creative industries. (Laksmi and Arjawa 2023). It is in line with the 2022 Jayapura Creative Economy Master Plan about the creative economy. Jayapura City Tourism Office (2022-2027) also highlights that the creative economy has become a main focus for government investment. This emphasis is based on the sector's significant contributions to economic growth and its capacity to generate added value, create jobs, and stimulate inter-sectoral linkages.

Despite the importance of developing local tourism and the creative economy, there are some challenges facing by Jayapura community: institutional and community-related issues. Institutional issues include suboptimal management practices within the creative economy sector. The problems are the lack of a clear strategic plan, no clear coordination between the institutions related to creative economics and ecotourism, and limited human resources within the official institution focused on ecotourism and creative economy. The Jayapura City Tourism Office official, Mr. MBM, said:

Our office lacks of clear strategic plan, vision, and mission, and the guidance for having coordination between institutions related, both the government and non-government institutions. Above that, we have a limited number of people who focus on the issues of ecotourism and creative economy.”

On the other hand, RS, the local community leader, stated:

The problems of developing the creative economy and ecotourism in Jayapura, including in Youtefa Bay, are related to the community. The limited knowledge about ecotourism and creative economy and traditional concept among the local community stimulates some problems, like happened in the parking area and tourist destination.”

Another informant, EM, also said about the problem related to the community:

The development of the creative economy remains largely confined to micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) that focus primarily on income generation, as the local community is unfamiliar with the concept of the creative economy. And once they operate a business, these enterprises often operate as family businesses, utilizing traditional and simple technologies, and face limited access to capital and insufficient quality of human resources.

The statement above noted the need for improvement among local economic activists to become resilient entrepreneurs. In the absence of strategic planning, there is no development design for business actors, resulting in a less focused approach to developing the business sector that supports the creative economy with an ecotourism base. The existing creative economic activities are closely tied to cultural values and personal needs, which makes them vulnerable to market competition (Akhmad 2005; Kadir 2022; Kadir et al. 2020).

The creative economy can significantly enhance the value of ecotourism products and services through the innovation and creativity of indigenous communities (Agung 2016; Rodrigues-Ferreira et al. 2023). The concept of ecotourism was first articulated by the Ecotourism Society in 1990, defining it as travel to natural areas intended to conserve the environment and improve the welfare of residents (Madaidy and Juwana 2019). Ecotourism is intrinsically linked to nature conservation, aiming to protect the environment and local communities' well-being (Fitriana and Ridlwan 2018). As an environmentally focused tourism activity that emphasizes conservation and education, ecotourism integrates creative economic activities to thrive. Therefore, developing ecotourism can foster an inclusive, creative economy among indigenous communities in Jayapura City, which is crucial for preserving local environments and cultures while generating sustainable economic opportunities.

Past studies highlight the potential benefits of indigenous involvement in ecotourism. For instance, research on an indigenous ecotourism venture in Mexico found that while economic benefits were limited, the most significant impacts were non-economic, contributing to community well-being and empowerment

(Lara-Morales and Clarke 2024). Similarly, a study in Thailand emphasized the role of Small and Medium Tourism Enterprises (SMTes) in rural transformation, with indigenous communities turning to ecotourism as an alternative to commercial agriculture (Sitikarn 2008). However, there are contradictions and challenges in achieving this alignment. A study in southern Mexico revealed that, despite the community's willingness to participate in tourism, a lack of knowledge, limited economic resources, and poor negotiation skills have disempowered the community from undertaking ecotourism ventures (Ramos and Prideaux 2014). Additionally, research on indigenous ecotourism globally has shown that it often fails to deliver expected benefits due to factors such as shortages in human, financial, and social capital, lack of fair benefit distribution mechanisms, and land insecurity (Coria and Calfucura 2012).

In other words, while involving indigenous communities in ecotourism management can potentially align development with local values, it requires addressing multiple challenges. Successful integration often depends on factors such as government support, sustainable resource use, fair benefit sharing, and strengthening local institutions (Yaman and Mohd 2004). The case of Indonesia demonstrates how traditional practices like "*sasi laut*" can be integrated into marine ecotourism development, benefiting both conservation and local communities (Prasetyo, Carr, and Filep 2020). However, the efficacy of collaborative arrangements in large-scale enterprises may be limited by contrasting cultural values and economic circumstances, suggesting that small-scale ecotourism ventures might be more appropriate in some contexts (Simonsen 2006).

Customary rights and governance issues complicate tourism development, while

inadequate infrastructure and limited investment hinder the progress of creative enterprises. Much like the global examples, the lack of a cohesive business ecosystem and the difficulty in accessing capital and marketing restrict the growth of the creative economy. Thus, for Jayapura to fully leverage its indigenous communities and resources, addressing these structural issues is essential. Both locally and globally, the effective integration of indigenous communities into ecotourism requires overcoming these hurdles and ensuring fair and sustainable development.

## Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight the significant potential of ecotourism in the Youtefa Bay Nature Tourism Park to enhance the creative economy of the indigenous legal community. By leveraging the unique attributes of ecotourism, indigenous communities in Jayapura City can foster an inclusive creative economy, improve their socioeconomic well-being, and safeguard their natural resources and cultural heritage. Additionally, this approach offers visitors unique and enriching experiences, showcasing both the natural beauty and cultural richness. In managing the Youtefa Bay Nature Tourism Park, indigenous communities can capitalize on their local wisdom, which aligns with the natural conditions and the surrounding environment. This traditional knowledge system has been integrated into their daily activities and is essential for effective ecotourism management.

This study not only examines the role of ecotourism in the development of Jayapura City's creative economy but also explores the implications of customary rights and land management within the Customary Law Community. It identifies the potential for ecotourism to address existing challenges and

aligns with various policies to bridge gaps between current practices and untapped opportunities. By offering a new perspective, this study contributes to the promotion of sustainable nature conservation, cultural preservation, and creative economic growth within the context of indigenous communities in Jayapura City.

Because this study is a case study, focusing on a specific location with its unique social, cultural, and natural contexts, it naturally yields specific results tailored to the study's context. Therefore, despite different natural, social, and cultural contexts, there are still opportunities for other researchers to explore various research areas.[]

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