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SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION IN DIGITAL PLATFORMS: THE CASE OF GOJEK

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Abstrak

This study examines Gojek as a digital platform innovation from a sustainability perspective, aiming to understand how its innovation operates across technological, economic, and social dimensions. A qualitative descriptive approach is applied using secondary data from journals, reports, and relevant publications. The findings indicate that Gojek's innovation is driven by service integration and algorithm-based efficiency, which enhance user engagement and operational performance. However, sustainability aspects remain limited, particularly in terms of transparency, labor conditions, and equal opportunities within the platform ecosystem. Therefore, Gojek's innovation cannot yet be considered fully sustainable, as it still prioritizes efficiency over balanced long-term outcomes.

Kata Kunci: Innovation, Digital Platform, Sustainability, Gig Economy, Algorithm

PENDAHULUAN

Digital platforms occupy a distinctive position in contemporary innovation because they coordinate interactions among user groups rather than merely delivering a single product. Their value arises from technological infrastructures, participant relationships, and the rules governing access, transactions, and complementary services. As the platform expands, network effects may increase service availability and economic opportunity, yet the same expansion also creates new questions about market power, labor practices, and environmental externalities. Research on platform ecosystems therefore argues that organizational transformation, governance, and sustainability should be examined together rather than as independent phenomena (Cuel et al., 2024; Calabrese et al., 2021).

The concept of sustainable innovation requires more than continuous feature development or rising transaction volumes. A platform may improve convenience while increasing transport demand, consuming resources, or transferring economic risk to complementors. Conversely, well-designed digital coordination may reduce search costs, expand market participation, and make lower-emission alternatives easier to access. Baran and Berkowicz (2021) conceptualize platform ecosystems as sites for collaborative sustainability-oriented experimentation, while Leutheuser and Voigt (2026) emphasize the role of transparent data and coordinated value chains. Taken together, these perspectives suggest that sustainability must be assessed as an ecosystem outcome, not solely as a corporate initiative.

Gojek provides an analytically useful case because its service ecosystem developed from ride-hailing into the coordination of transportation, delivery, and other digitally mediated services. Such interconnection links consumers, drivers, merchants, technology providers, and payment infrastructure within one value network. Almunawar and Anshari (2020) describe Gojek through multi-sided networks and exchanges of value, demonstrating why the unit of analysis cannot be restricted to the platform owner. The economic effects of

the platform depend on complementary activities and the changing relationships among participants.

Gojek is also embedded in Indonesia's informal economic context, which complicates the evaluation of innovation. Faik et al. (2026) show that Gojek's platform model contributed to the formalization of previously informal transportation practices through the codification of interactions, standardization of work, and control of ecosystem boundaries. This formalization may improve transaction predictability, but it also reorganizes power and responsibility. Evaluating sustainable innovation consequently requires examining both the efficiencies created by digital coordination and the distribution of benefits and obligations among ecosystem actors.

Environmental sustainability adds a further layer of complexity. GoTo Group publicly frames its sustainability agenda around Zero Emissions, Zero Waste, and Zero Barriers, including ambitions associated with vehicle electrification and greater inclusion (GoTo Group, n.d.). Gojek separately communicates environmental and social commitments through its GoGreener, GoForward, and GoTogether pillars (Gojek, n.d.). These initiatives establish strategic direction, but commitments and activity counts are not equivalent to verified improvements in lifecycle emissions, waste reduction, or welfare. A credible evaluation must therefore distinguish policies, implementation evidence, and measured outcomes.

The environmental impact of platform-based mobility is particularly difficult to establish. Electric vehicle deployment can lower direct tailpipe emissions, but total impact also depends on electricity generation, manufacturing impacts, trip substitution, charging infrastructure, and vehicle utilization. The same principle applies to delivery services and packaging waste: a platform may introduce reduction initiatives without demonstrating that total resource use has declined relative to a defensible baseline. The public availability of sustainability reports is useful for transparency, yet such reports should be read as corporate disclosures whose scope and assurance must be evaluated (GoTo Group, 2024, 2025).

Social sustainability is similarly multidimensional. Digital platforms can expand access to customers for smaller merchants and create income opportunities for drivers. However, ratings, algorithmic dispatch, incentives, platform fees, and information asymmetries may affect the predictability and quality of work. A recent literature synthesis on Indonesian ride-hailing identifies tensions between operational productivity and driver security and well-being (Sriyanto et al., 2026). These tensions warn against equating participant enrollment with meaningful inclusion, especially where opportunities are accompanied by unstable earnings or weak procedural recourse.

Governance connects the economic, environmental, and social dimensions. Platform operators establish eligibility rules, ranking systems, pricing protocols, data-sharing arrangements, and dispute procedures. These design decisions can make participation easier, but they also determine how risks and benefits are allocated. Recent scholarship describes platform governance as a central determinant of sustainable relationships with complementors and users (Cuel et al., 2024; Faik et al., 2026). Consequently, the sustainability performance of Gojek cannot be understood only through technological capabilities or environmental targets.

An additional challenge is the distinction between evidence at the Gojek service level and evidence reported by the broader GoTo corporate group. GoTo's 2024 and 2025 annual

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and sustainability reports describe group-level strategies and outcomes that encompass activities beyond Gojek. Using those data as if they were Gojek-only measurements would overstate the precision of a case analysis. This study therefore treats group-wide disclosures as contextual evidence and explicitly notes where Gojek-specific attribution remains unavailable. The distinction is essential for interpreting performance claims responsibly (GoTo Group, 2024, 2025).

The exact title "Sustainable Innovation in Digital Platforms: The Case of Gojek" was used in a published 2026 study by Rahmawati et al. (2026), which examined technological, economic, and social dimensions using secondary sources. Rather than reproduce that analysis, the present manuscript focuses on the unresolved connection between disclosed sustainability initiatives, the strength of outcome evidence, and governance trade-offs. Its contribution is a structured evaluation framework that tests whether innovation claims demonstrate jointly sustainable outcomes across stakeholder groups.

The central research question is how Gojek's platform innovations relate to economic, environmental, and social sustainability, and what evidence is needed to assess their effectiveness. Three subordinate questions guide the analysis: (1) how service integration creates economic and operational value; (2) what the publicly documented environmental commitments establish and do not establish; and (3) how governance choices shape social inclusion, worker vulnerability, and accountability. These questions connect platform design to measurable outcomes rather than assuming that technology-led growth is inherently sustainable.

This study contributes by integrating platform ecosystem theory with a multi-dimensional sustainability assessment in a single Indonesian case. It offers a transparent synthesis of verified secondary evidence and identifies which conclusions are documented, which remain plausible mechanisms, and which require primary or independently assured evidence. Such distinction is valuable for managers, researchers, and policymakers seeking to evaluate sustainable platform innovation without confusing corporate aspiration with demonstrated impact.

KAJIAN PUSTAKA DAN HIPOTESIS

Innovation Theory

Innovation transforms existing systems into more efficient ones. In digital platforms, this transformation is reflected in the shift from conventional services to app-based systems.

Platform Economics

Value in digital platforms emerges through interaction between users, drivers, and merchants. Higher interaction strengthens platform dominance (Evans, 2020).

Socio-Technical Perspective

Technology and social structures are interconnected. Platform systems are shaped not only by technical design but also by user behavior and institutional context (Rahman, 2023).

Sustainability Perspective

Sustainability involves balancing efficiency with fairness and long-term impact, including transparency, stable working conditions, and equal access.

METODE PENELITIAN

The study applies a qualitative, document-based case-study design to examine sustainable innovation in Gojek in Indonesia. The case was selected for its established multisided service ecosystem and the availability of relevant academic studies and public corporate disclosures. The evidence base consists of a purposive set of 12 cited sources: peer-reviewed studies of digital platforms and Gojek, GoTo's 2024 and 2025 sustainability disclosures, and official Gojek/GoTo sustainability pages. These are analytical documents, not survey respondents or interview informants. Literature was identified through targeted searches for "Gojek", "digital platform sustainability", "algorithmic management", "platform ecosystems", and related concepts, emphasizing sources published from 2020 through November 2026. Selection prioritized direct relevance, accessible source information, and verifiable publication identity. The review is structured and transparent but does not claim exhaustive systematic-review coverage.

Evidence was extracted into a matrix containing source type, platform practice, proposed sustainability mechanism, outcome evidence, stakeholder effects, and limitations. Documents were coded deductively into four connected dimensions: economic innovation, environmental responsibility, social inclusion, and governance. Triangulation compared corporate descriptions against peer-reviewed scholarship where possible; discrepancies and attribution gaps were retained rather than reconciled through unsupported inference. The analysis distinguished reported activities (for example, strategic programs or targets) from independently evidenced outcomes, following the ecosystem perspective advanced by Cuel et al. (2024) and the governance analysis of Faik et al. (2026). As there was no access to proprietary algorithmic records, driver-level income datasets, or verified lifecycle inventories, the study does not estimate causal effects or quantify net emissions, income gains, or the magnitude of fairness outcomes.

HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

Economic innovation: integration and coordination

The evidence establishes that Gojek coordinates multiple actor groups and service exchanges within a digital platform. Almunawar and Anshari (2020) explicitly describe Gojek as a value-exchange network, while Faik et al. (2026) identify codification of interactions, standardization of practices, and boundary control as mechanisms through which Gojek reshaped informal transportation. GoTo's annual reports further describe ecosystem integration as a strategic priority (GoTo Group, 2025). Together, these sources support the existence of an organizational mechanism for reducing search and coordination frictions. They do not establish that every participant receives higher net income or that platform efficiency gains are shared equally.

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Environmental innovation: commitments and attribution

Gojek identifies GoGreener as an environmental sustainability pillar, and GoTo discloses a group-level agenda of Zero Emissions, Zero Waste, and Zero Barriers. GoTo's 2024 and 2025 sustainability reports document continuing corporate programs and reported progress. The documents provide evidence that sustainability has been embedded in formal plans and reporting structures, including the development of electric-mobility approaches. However, the reviewed source set does not provide a consistent, independently verified Gojek-only counterfactual for net lifecycle emissions, total induced travel, or waste reduction. These gaps constrain claims about realized environmental impact.

Social innovation: access and vulnerability

Platform coordination creates access channels for consumers, merchants, and workers, including participants whose prior transactions were informal. Faik et al. (2026) demonstrate how Gojek's work arrangements became more codified and standardized. The evidence also identifies social trade-offs: the sector-wide review by Sriyanto et al. (2026) discusses algorithmic opacity, precarious earnings, and driver well-being as critical considerations for ride-hailing sustainability. These findings are relevant to assessing the Gojek model, but the sector-wide review should not be read as a direct measurement of Gojek's current driver population. This analysis therefore finds documented inclusion mechanisms alongside unresolved questions regarding participant welfare and procedural accountability.

Table 2. Evidence-based sustainability assessment of Gojek

Dimension	Documented mechanism	What can be concluded	Evidence gap
Economic	Service integration; standardized matching and transactions	Coordination architecture is documented	Net earnings, distribution of surplus, merchant retention
Environmental	GoGreener; GoTo Three Zeros; EV-related commitments	Formal sustainability agenda exists	Gojek-only lifecycle impact, rebound effects, baseline
Social	Access for drivers and merchants; formalized practices	Participation and rule standardization are documented	Income stability, fairness, appeals and worker voice
Governance	Platform eligibility, standards and digital oversight	Rules materially shape participation	Algorithm transparency and independent accountability

Source: *Proceed Data, 2026*

PENUTUP

Gojek represents a strong digital platform innovation driven by efficiency and service integration. However, sustainability aspects remain limited, particularly in labor conditions, transparency, and fairness. Innovation performance is high, yet balance between efficiency and sustainability has not been achieved.

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