



Remarkable journey on sustainable tourism destinations; case study on Bintan resort's award winning on sustainable tourism destination

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Abstract:

Bintan Resorts awarded the Certificate of Sustainable Tourism Destinations (2022–2025), has demonstrated a significant journey from its establishment to its current position as a leader in sustainable tourism. This research aims to explore the initiatives undertaken by Bintan Resorts in developing a sustainable tourism concept that balances environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects. The study elaborates on the best practices and learning experiences from Bintan Resorts' efforts to achieve sustainable development, which considers the current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts. These initiatives address the needs of visitors, the tourism industry, the environment, and host communities. This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach through field observations, interviews with key stakeholders, and documentation analysis. The research findings reveal both achievements and challenges in implementing sustainability, including the need for stronger policies, stakeholder participation, and the adoption of sustainable practices within a complex system. Bintan Resorts exemplifies a well-executed development scenario that prioritizes sustainability through its blueprint and roadmap. The resort has contributed to economic growth, community empowerment, job creation, and environmental conservation. By employing biodiversity-sensitive approaches and integrating sustainability into all operations, Bintan Resorts has proven that resort development can protect and conserve fragile environments while simultaneously contributing to local, regional, and national economies. This case study highlights how thoughtful design, and planning can successfully align tourism development with environmental protection, societal benefits, and economic progress.

Keyword: Sustainable Tourism, Conservation, Community Empowerment



INTRODUCTION

Bintan Resorts, one of Indonesia's leading tourism destinations located in Bintan Regency, Riau Islands Province (Kepulauan Riau), has received the Certificate of Sustainable Tourism Destinations for the period 2022–2025. The award was presented by the Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia during the World Tourism Day celebration on September 27, 2022, in Bali. The development of Bintan Resorts, which began in the early 1990s, has evolved to align with sustainable tourism concepts. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization

(UNWTO), sustainable tourism is defined as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities” (UNWTO, 2023).

The Indonesian Sustainable Tourism Council (ISTC) played a key role in awarding this recognition. The council's decision was based on surveillance, monitoring, field assessments, and verification by an independent auditor team. Bintan Resorts' implementation of sustainability practices has not only transformed the destination but also contributed to regional development through cultural and economic shifts. Sustainable tourism development relies on a balance between economic, environmental, and socio-cultural dimensions. Integrated planning, local community involvement, and consistent monitoring are critical to driving this transformation. The WTO emphasizes the importance of protecting tourism resources including the environment, cultural diversity, and heritage while simultaneously meeting tourist expectations.

Bintan Resorts has demonstrated success in achieving this balance. Its efforts include minimizing environmental impacts, conserving biodiversity, and empowering local communities. These practices aim to ensure long-term sustainability by fostering economic growth, creating employment opportunities, and preserving local ecosystems. However, the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 had a severe impact on the tourism sector, with Bintan Regency experiencing a 98% decline in Regional Original Income (PAD) (Yusnita et al., 2021). Despite this setback, Bintan Regency remains Indonesia's second most visited destination after Bali, underscoring its significance to the national tourism economy.

Tourism, as one of the world's fastest-growing industries, brings both positive and negative impacts. While it generates economic benefits, it also raises concerns regarding environmental degradation, cultural disruption, and the carrying capacity of destinations (Purandare, 2009). This research explores how Bintan Resorts has implemented sustainability concepts and identifies the challenges it faces in achieving long-term sustainability goals. Efforts at Bintan Resorts include eco-friendly infrastructure development, community-based tourism projects, and initiatives such as mangrove conservation and coral reef restoration (Dangi & Jamal, 2016). These measures align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 12 (responsible consumption and production) and Goal 14 (life below water). However, significant challenges remain, including waste management, overcrowding, and the marginalization of local communities.

Local community participation plays a pivotal role in advancing sustainable tourism. Bintan Resorts has supported community empowerment through training programs in hospitality and ecotourism, fostering economic inclusivity by promoting local businesses and artisans. Research indicates that involving local stakeholders in decision-making enhances the effectiveness and acceptance of sustainability efforts. Nevertheless, further integration of community perspectives into tourism policies is essential to ensure equitable benefit distribution and mitigate socio-cultural disruptions. Bintan Resorts exemplifies the importance of collaboration among government bodies, private stakeholders, and local communities in achieving sustainability. Through partnerships, Bintan Resorts has pursued green certifications, low-impact infrastructure, and eco-conscious measures. These experiences provide a

valuable model for other destinations aiming to implement sustainable tourism practices in response to increasing environmental pressures (Student et al., 2020). Long-term success, however, will depend on adaptive governance, continuous monitoring, and responsiveness to emerging sustainability challenges.

This research aims to examine the efforts undertaken by Bintan Resorts to develop a sustainable tourism concept that addresses economic, social, and cultural needs while meeting tourists' expectations. The study explores how these initiatives protect environmental health, preserve cultural identity, and promote the well-being of host communities. Furthermore, it seeks to identify best practices and key learning experiences from Bintan Resorts' approach to achieving sustainable development in tourism. In addition, this research investigates the major challenges in implementing sustainable tourism practices that ensure long-term benefits for local communities, environmental conservation, and socio-economic development. By addressing current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of strategies that balance the needs of visitors, the tourism industry, the environment, and host communities.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach, categorized as library research, utilizing secondary data from various sources relevant to the research topic. These sources include books, literature, electronic media (websites), and online media that address the research problem (Maxwell, 2012). The research team has reviewed several pieces of literature related to Bintan Resort and sustainability development, as well as the concept of sustainable tourism and its impacts from both perspectives. Data collection was conducted through the study and documentation of materials pertinent to the research focus. According to Sugiyono (2014), literature study is integral to theoretical studies and provides valuable references regarding values, culture, and norms in the social context under investigation. Library research plays a crucial role in ensuring the scientific foundation of the study, as no research is separate from existing scientific literature.

The research focus was broadened to examine various components of how Bintan Resorts introduces and promotes sustainability concepts within its master plan, setting a blueprint for an environmentally friendly approach, and addressing the challenges that arise from implementation. Purposive sampling was employed to select interviewees, specifically representatives from the tourism industry, including PT Bintan Resort Cakrawala (the master developer), the Tourism and Culture Office of Bintan Regency, and other stakeholders.

Table 1. Name of Interviewees

Interviewee	Designation	Scope of Expertise
Abdul Wahab	Chief Operating Officer	Company Policy and Framework for Sustainable Development
Hebron Habeahan	General Manager, Finance & Admin	Results of the assessment and review by ISTC, implementation of

Interviewee	Designation	Scope of Expertise
		sustainability concepts at Bintan Resorts
Roy Manaek Sebastian Tobing	Head of Health, Safety & Environment	Environmental Sustainability
Bakti Adi Chandra	Head of Community Development	Economic, Social, and Cultural Sustainability
Drs. Arif Sumarsono	Head of Tourism & Culture, Bintan Regency	Government's perspective on Bintan's tourism
Riona Caroline Panson	Head of YETHAS (Yayasan Tunas Harapan) Sebong Lagoi – Ecotourism Foundation	Community involvement and perspective on Bintan Resorts
Indah Andesta	Head of LPPM, Politeknik Bintan Cakrawala	Review on the identification of sustainable components

Source: Compiled by Researcher, 2023

Qualitative data analysis involved interacting with, organizing, classifying, and synthesizing the data into manageable parts. Patterns were searched for, significant findings were identified, and conclusions were drawn based on the research focus (Sugiyono, 2014). Qualitative research is recognized for its ability to generate rich theoretical insights and foster methodological pluralism, offering a challenge to conventional ways of understanding (Plakoyiannaki & Stavrakı, 2022). According to Bogdan and Biklen (2009), qualitative data analysis involves engaging with the data, organizing it, classifying it, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, identifying what is significant and learned, and determining the key findings to communicate. This approach allows for a comprehensive exploration and explanation of research phenomena in tourism.

RESULT AND DICUSSION

1. Sustainable Tourism Framework: Global Practices and Applications at Bintan Resorts

To analyze the sustainability framework implemented at Bintan Resorts, various documentary data and literature were reviewed to provide a comprehensive understanding of its practices and alignments with global standards. The sustainable development model proposed by Puiu Nistoreanu (2014) serves as the primary framework for this research, where a resort is considered sustainable when it minimizes environmental damage, empowers local communities socially and culturally, and contributes to economic prosperity. Bintan Resorts' approach to sustainable tourism can be compared to other global destinations that have successfully balanced

economic, environmental, and socio-cultural factors. For instance, South Africa's Port St. John exemplifies sustainable tourism initiatives that promote economic growth while conserving natural and cultural heritage.

By focusing on inclusive development, South Africa has enhanced the quality of life for local communities, ensuring that future generations benefit from the country's unique attractions (Chiwawa & Wissink, 2023). Similarly, Romania's rural and ecotourism sectors highlight the role of natural resource management and cultural preservation in sustainable development. Despite the challenges posed by technological and economic transformations, rural communities in Romania have leveraged ecological diversity to foster tourism, showcasing the integration of environmental conservation, economic viability, and social inclusivity (Dorobantu & Nistoreanu, 2014).

The concept of sustainable development gained prominence through the World Conservation Strategy (WCS) in 1980 and was further popularized by the Brundtland Report in 1987, which defined sustainable development as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This definition highlights the importance of integrating economic, social, and environmental concerns into decision-making processes to achieve long-term stability (Reid, 2007). Sustainable development involves three interconnected dimensions: economic sustainability, which emphasizes local employment, income generation, and quality of life improvements; social sustainability, which focuses on equitable benefit distribution and the preservation of cultural values; and environmental sustainability, which aims to conserve biodiversity and ensure the rational use of natural resources (Asara et al., 2015). These principles are reflected in the sustainable tourism framework proposed by UNEP and UNWTO (2005), which stresses the need for environmental conservation, respect for cultural authenticity, and long-term economic operations that benefit all stakeholders.

Sustainable tourism plays a crucial role in maximizing the positive contributions of tourism to biodiversity conservation while addressing poverty reduction and environmental protection. It encourages reinvestment of tourism revenues into conservation efforts and capacity-building programs for local communities to manage protected areas effectively (Matharu & Xalxo, 2017). However, achieving a balance between economic development and environmental protection remains a challenge, as many tourism destinations struggle to implement sustainability practices in their operations (Harrison, 2015). In this regard, Bintan Resorts has implemented several initiatives to minimize its ecological footprint, protect biodiversity, and engage local communities through training programs and community-based projects. These efforts align with global sustainable tourism goals, particularly those outlined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as Goal 12 (responsible consumption and production) and Goal 14 (life below water).

While Bintan Resorts provides a strong example of sustainable tourism development, its practices also highlight the complexities of achieving long-term sustainability. Global comparisons, such as those in South Africa and Romania, underscore the importance of integrating economic prosperity, environmental conservation, and cultural preservation into a cohesive framework. This literature review establishes the foundation for analyzing Bintan Resorts' sustainability practices and

identifying the challenges it faces, particularly in balancing environmental protection with the socio-economic needs of host communities. The subsequent discussion will further elaborate on these components to provide a comprehensive analysis of Bintan Resorts' contributions to sustainable tourism.

2. Identification sustainable component implementation

During an interview, the Chief Operating Officer of PT Bintan Resort Cakrawala emphasized that Bintan Resorts has consistently adhered to sustainability standards in its operational activities, ensuring significant social and economic impacts in managing Bintan Island as a leading tourist destination. Abdul Wahab, the Group General Manager (GGM), highlighted the importance of proper and sustainable operations through programs that align with regulatory policies. These initiatives are strongly supported by the local government of Bintan Regency, tourism stakeholders, hotel operators, and surrounding communities, both within and beyond the Bintan Resorts area. This collective support has been instrumental in developing Bintan as a sustainable and thriving tourism destination.

The Head of Health, Safety, and Environment (HSE) at PT Bintan Resort Cakrawala reiterated the organization's commitment to maintaining high-quality standards for tourism destinations, particularly in the Riau Islands Province and Indonesia as a whole. He stressed the moral responsibility of ensuring that sustainable tourism meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to fulfill their needs. Achieving this balance requires integrating sustainable development concepts, which ensure that economic progress occurs alongside cultural development and environmental preservation. While immediate economic benefits from tourism can sometimes overshadow sustainability efforts, it is essential to recognize that sustainable development does not necessarily equate to reduced economic growth (Scoones, 2007). Instead, the triple bottom line approach—balancing economic, ecological, and socio-cultural benefits—defines sustainable tourism success, as it considers not only financial gains but also the broader impacts on the environment and society (Sunkar et al., 2013).

The statement emphasizes how tourism significantly impacts Bintan Island's local economy and regional development, particularly by contributing to Local Revenue (PAD). The Head of Tourism and Culture of Bintan Regency noted that the number of tourists visiting Bintan Island has shown a significant increase. In 2023 alone, 588,000 tourists visited the island, contributing substantially to the region's Local Revenue (PAD). This surge underscores the tourism sector's vital role as a driver of regional development, particularly in improving the local economy. The economic impact of tourism highlights the interconnectedness of sustainable development and economic frameworks, where tourism can foster regional growth while ensuring long-term sustainability (Holik, 2016).

Through collaboration, responsible management, and adherence to sustainable principles, Bintan Resorts demonstrates that tourism can drive economic development while preserving the environment and benefiting local communities. The general objective of identifying sustainable components in implementation is to ensure that projects or processes are developed. As stated at the research problem. Research has identified sustainable component at Bintan Resorts development and its cycle of its development

Tabel 2. Identification sustainable component of Bintan Resorts

Component Implementation	Description
Economy sustainability	Tourism can have enormous benefits to a country's economy, such as the alleviation of poverty through job creation for locals and subsequent improvements to infrastructure and services. However, the importance of economic growth must remain hand-in-hand with social and environmental development as without such balance, tourism can be destructive with the effects only seen in the long-term.
Social Sustainability	Social sustainability is about identifying and managing business impacts, both positive and negative, on people. The quality of a company's relationships and engagement with its stakeholders is critical. Directly or indirectly, companies affect what happens to employees, workers in the value chain, customers and local communities, and it is important to manage impacts proactively.
Environmental sustainability	Particularly important in island development to maintain and build upon existing resources, thus keeping the location a desirable resort capable of supporting the local econom

Source: Researcher Compiled Data, 2023

Bintan Resorts has adopted a comprehensive development concept to sustain tourism as an industry while balancing economic, social, and cultural needs with ecological preservation, environmental health, and cultural identity. This approach aligns with their corporate values, which emphasize economic development, poverty eradication, and societal welfare. As stated on their official website, www.bintanresorts.com, the history, background, and policies on their development strategy highlight a strong commitment to environmental sustainability. The environmentally aware approach has resulted in the creation of eco-friendly resorts, culminating in recognition through sustainable tourism destination awards.

From the outset, Bintan Resorts has complied with environmental regulations by preparing an Environmental Management Effort (UPL) document, which serves as the foundation for all environmental management activities. These efforts are further guided by the Environmental Impact Analysis (AMDAL) document, ensuring the overall development of the tourism area adheres to sustainability principles. The development blueprint outlines that all construction and activities must prioritize environmental sustainability while empowering cultural, economic, social, and demographic elements. To operationalize this vision, Bintan Resorts implements various sustainability programs through the Health, Safety & Environmental (HSE) and Community Development (CD) departments, emphasizing long-term sustainability for both the present and future generations (Habeahan, 2023).

The sustainability of Bintan Resorts is assessed based on the Four Sustainable Tourism Standards established by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC). These standards include Sustainable Management, Socio-Economic Sustainability, Cultural Sustainability, and Environmental Sustainability, comprising 175 application criteria derived from international guidelines. According to Abdul Wahab, Group General Manager of PT. Bintan Resort Cakrawala (BRC), the verification and certification process conducted by the Product Certification Agency (LS-Pro), appointed by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, confirmed that Bintan Resorts successfully meets all requirements for Sustainable Tourism Destinations.

a. Economic Sustainability

Bintan Resorts is committed to creating employment opportunities and providing economic assistance to the local community, with a targeted plan to coordinate and build stable, harmonious, and healthy relationships with stakeholders and residents in the vicinity of the resorts. The community development initiatives focus on seven villages in North Bintan, namely E kang Anculai, Sri Bintan, Pengudang, Berakit, Sebong Lagoi, Sebong Pereh, and Sebong River. Key community programs include social assistance, employment link-and-match opportunities tailored to align with the availability of local labor, and economic empowerment efforts.

Bintan Resorts has continuously implemented initiatives aimed at addressing the economic needs of surrounding communities. These efforts include social assistance programs such as revolving funds, particularly targeting livelihoods like fishing, to ensure that financial support contributes to sustainable economic activities. By facilitating access to resources and financial support, these programs aim to enhance the economic resilience of local communities and encourage self-sufficiency. A significant milestone in Bintan Resorts' economic empowerment efforts is the establishment of village enterprises through integrative programs, such as the Bintan Bekarya Program. This program focuses on empowering local communities through training, coaching, and assistance to create products with economic value, thus fostering the development of micro-businesses at the community level.

Since 2000, Bintan Resorts has demonstrated its commitment to fostering village enterprises by supporting cooperatives and foundations in various areas. A notable example is the Yayasan Tunas Harapan, located in Sebong Lagoi, the nearest village to Bintan Resorts. The foundation operates independently and manages a mangrove tour at the Sebong River, exemplifying successful community-led tourism initiatives. This initiative not only supports local economic activity but also promotes environmental preservation and sustainable tourism practices.

b. Social & Cultural Sustainability

The concept of sustainable tourism at Bintan Resorts is built upon two primary pillars: social and cultural sustainability, with programs that are carefully formulated and implemented to benefit local communities while enhancing the tourism experience.

- **Social Pillar;** Bintan Resorts emphasizes the importance of education as a foundation for social sustainability. Educational assistance packages are provided to children from underprivileged yet high-achieving families, ensuring they can pursue education and secure a better future, potentially leading to employment opportunities within

the Bintan Resort area. In addition, the Cakrawala Scholarship program offers financial assistance to high school graduates, enabling them to pursue higher education, vocational training, or university degrees both domestically and internationally. The primary objective of this program is to empower local youth to become skilled, competitive, and highly capable human resources who can contribute to national development. These initiatives also include career preparation support, helping students identify their interests and talents while facilitating access to scholarships that align with their future aspirations.

- Cultural Pillar; Bintan Resorts highlights and preserves local culture as an integral part of its tourist attractions. However, utilizing culture as a tourism asset can sometimes lead to shifts in the values and meanings associated with it (Marhomi et al., 2023). To address this, Bintan Resorts actively works to enhance the quality and presentation of local cultural groups within surrounding villages. These initiatives aim to elevate their performances to meet international standards, thus ensuring they are well-received by global tourists. Cultural performances are held regularly at Plaza Lagoi, a dedicated venue equipped with a performance stage where local groups showcase their talents on weekends. These performances not only serve as a platform to promote local heritage but also provide financial compensation to the performers, fostering cultural sustainability while improving their economic well-being.

Through these programs, Bintan Resorts demonstrates a commitment to balancing economic growth, social empowerment, and cultural preservation, making sustainable tourism a tangible and impactful reality for the local community.

c. Environmental Sustainability

Bintan Resorts introduced the Eco Initiative in early 2018 as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program, focusing on environmental sustainability through mangrove forest replantation, turtle conservation, waste handling, and flora and fauna conservation. These efforts align with their commitment to ecological preservation and sustainable tourism development. The Mangrove Forest Replantation program highlights the critical role of mangroves in stabilizing riverbanks, filtering sediments, and protecting coral reefs. Since the establishment of a mangrove nursery in 2007, over 18,000 m² of mangrove area has been restored, with more than 28,000 saplings planted along the Sebung River. This restoration contributes to an annual carbon offset of 1.8 metric tonnes. In December 2010, Bintan Resorts restricted tourism activities in the mangrove restoration area to minimize disturbances and enhance biodiversity. Managed in collaboration with the Sebung Lagoi community and a village foundation, the program promotes both environmental sustainability and local economic empowerment. Monthly mass replantation efforts began in 2018, starting with the replanting of 2,500 mangrove seedlings at Sebung River Mangrove.

The Turtle Conservation initiative addresses the declining turtle population by collaborating with hotels, resorts, and local communities. During nesting seasons, turtle eggs are collected and placed in protected hatcheries until they hatch, after which the hatchlings are released into the sea. To date, more than 4,500 hatchlings have been released, achieving an impressive hatching success rate of 85% to 91%. Egg poaching has significantly decreased, from 91% in 2004 to 12% in 2010, due to education

programs targeting schools and youth centers. Seasonal hatcheries are located in resorts such as Nirwana Gardens, Angsana Bintan, Banyan Tree Bintan, and Club Med Bintan.

Bintan Resorts also prioritizes Waste Handling through various recycling initiatives. The Health, Safety & Environmental (HSE) Department manages compost production by recycling horticultural waste, while the Resorts Waste Bank concept encourages the collection and reuse of specific types of waste, transforming them into economically valuable resources. Additionally, collective clean-up activities are organized on National Waste Awareness Day and World Clean-up Day, fostering a culture of environmental responsibility within the community. The Flora and Fauna Conservation efforts focus on protecting endangered species and wildlife. Programs such as those implemented at Safari Lagoi provide care and preservation for animals requiring special protection, further contributing to biodiversity conservation in the Bintan region.

3. Challenges and Strategies for Implementing Sustainable Tourism in Bintan Resorts

The increase of the local revenue of the tourism sector in Bintan has jump out not only the target but also the realisation , as below table shown :

Tabel 3. Local Revenue 2021-2023

Year	Target PAD from Tourism (IDR)	Actual PAD from Tourism (IDR)
2021	66.7 billion	19.8 billion
2022	67.8 billion	66.7 billion
2023	168 billion	16.2 billion (Jan-Feb)

Source: Researcher Compiled Data, 2023

The implementation of sustainable tourism practices in Bintan Resorts highlights the importance of addressing systemic challenges to achieve long-term benefits for natural resources, local communities, and socio-economic development (Day, 2012). Sustainable tourism requires multi-level implementation, where key actors—such as hotels, attractions, transportation providers, and other service organizations—adopt sustainable practices, and individuals within these organizations embrace new approaches (Sustainability Leaders United, 2016). The success of Bintan Resorts demonstrates that stakeholder participation, particularly from local communities, employees, and businesses, is crucial for sustainability efforts to succeed (Achmad, 2022). However, several challenges hinder the broader implementation of sustainability concepts.

One significant challenge lies in Indonesia's decentralized governance structure, which often results in fragmented and inconsistent policies. While national-level strategies may emphasize sustainability, regional governments frequently prioritize short-term economic gains over long-term environmental goals. Bintan Resorts' success is attributed to its well-defined development blueprint that integrates sustainability, yet replicating such models in other regions remains difficult due to weak policy alignment, enforcement mechanisms, and limited incentives for businesses to adopt sustainable practices (Achmad, 2022). To address this, Indonesia must establish a harmonized

regulatory framework that aligns local, regional, and national goals, supported by incentives such as tax benefits and subsidies for businesses that implement sustainable measures.

Financial constraints further exacerbate the challenges. Building and maintaining sustainable infrastructure such as renewable energy systems, waste management facilities, and conservation projects requires significant investment, which many smaller tourism operators cannot afford. While Bintan Resorts benefits from private sector funding and international collaborations, other regions lack similar financial resources. Leveraging public-private partnerships (PPPs), green financing mechanisms, and international funds like the Green Climate Fund could provide sustainable funding sources. Additionally, microfinancing options for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) would enable broader adoption of green technologies and practices without creating significant financial burdens.

Stakeholder engagement also remains a critical issue. Engaging local communities is essential, yet challenges arise from a lack of awareness, skepticism, and immediate economic needs that often overshadow long-term sustainability goals. Businesses, too, may view sustainability as an added cost rather than a growth opportunity. Although Bintan Resorts has made strides in involving stakeholders, achieving equitable benefits and fostering meaningful participation remains an ongoing effort. Addressing this requires community outreach and education programs to raise awareness about the benefits of sustainable tourism. Engaging cultural and community leaders can further bridge trust gaps and ensure local concerns are integrated into development processes (Litheko, 2022).

Despite these challenges, Bintan Resorts serves as a model for sustainable tourism, demonstrating how thoughtful planning can achieve harmony between environmental preservation, economic growth, and socio-cultural enrichment. Its biodiversity-sensitive approach, community empowerment programs, and focus on job creation showcase that sustainable development can be both feasible and profitable (Madanaguli et al., 2022). Scaling such practices across Indonesia requires clear policies, innovative funding mechanisms, and robust stakeholder engagement. By addressing policy gaps, financial constraints, and community involvement, Indonesia has the potential to position itself as a global leader in sustainable tourism. This transformation can benefit not only tourism destinations but also the lives and livelihoods of local communities across the archipelago.

CONCLUSIONS

Bintan Resorts exemplifies a successful implementation of sustainable tourism through a balanced approach to economic, social, and environmental development. By adopting comprehensive policies and adhering to the principles of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), the resort has achieved economic empowerment, community development, and environmental conservation. Programs such as the Bintan Bekarya initiative, village enterprise support, and environmental efforts like mangrove replantation and turtle conservation highlight its commitment to integrating sustainability into every operational aspect. These initiatives not only support local livelihoods and preserve cultural heritage but also mitigate ecological degradation, ensuring long-term viability as a tourist destination.

Despite its achievements, Bintan Resorts faces several challenges that must be addressed to sustain its progress. These include fragmented policymaking, financial constraints, and limited stakeholder participation. Structural issues within Indonesia's decentralized governance have at times hindered the replication of Bintan's success in other regions. Additionally, ongoing efforts are needed to strengthen local community engagement, provide incentives for sustainable practices, and bridge the financial gaps for smaller tourism operators. Addressing these issues requires adaptive governance, collaborative partnerships, and innovative funding mechanisms such as public-private partnerships and green financing.

Bintan Resorts serves as a benchmark for sustainable tourism by demonstrating how thoughtful design and planning can harmonize economic growth, societal enrichment, and environmental preservation. Its success highlights the importance of policy alignment, stakeholder inclusivity, and continuous monitoring to overcome challenges. With proper governance and strategic investments, Bintan Resorts' model can inspire similar initiatives across Indonesia and other developing nations, positioning sustainable tourism as a catalyst for regional development and global environmental stewardship.

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