

# Strategic Leadership for Sustainable Tourism in Indonesia: Transformation, Adaptation, and Inclusion

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ABSTRACT



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*Tourism sustainability is a major challenge in the development of tourist destinations in Indonesia, especially during climate change, digitalisation, and the growing need for social inclusion. This research aims to explore the role of strategic leadership in driving tourism sustainability through transformation, adaptation and inclusion approaches. This research uses a systematic literature review approach to identify and analyse literature relevant to the topic. By analysing various scholarly articles, research reports, and related publications, this research reveals that the application of these three approaches-transformation, adaptation, and inclusion-can create a holistic strategic framework to achieve tourism sustainability. The findings provide insights into how strategic leadership can enhance the effectiveness of sustainability policies and encourage community engagement in tourism destination management. This research contributes to the tourism leadership and sustainability literature and offers a framework that can be used for further research in managing sustainable tourism in Indonesia.*

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism sustainability has become a pressing global issue, given its far-reaching environmental, social, and local economic impacts. Many tourist destinations in developing countries, including Indonesia, face significant challenges in managing human resources (HR) that support tourism sustainability principles (Wijaya et al., 2019; Hermawati, 2020). Although tourism sustainability has become a major focus in global policy, sustainable human resource management is often overlooked in the implementation of sustainability strategies. In fact, the competence and engagement of the workforce determine the effectiveness of the implementation of sustainability principles. With increasing global pressures such as climate change, digitalisation, and travellers' expectations of eco-friendly and inclusive destinations, sustainable workforce management is becoming increasingly urgent (UNWTO, 2018).

Existing sustainability policies and initiatives, although well designed, are often not followed by effective implementation. One of the main reasons for this gap is the lack of attention to sustainable human resource management. Several studies have shown that HRM that focuses on skills enhancement, capacity building and sustainability awareness is still limited, especially in tourism destinations in Indonesia (Srivastava & Singh, 2023). In fact, in the context of sustainable tourism, strategic leaders have a crucial role in designing a long-term vision that not only focuses on economic growth, but also on socio-cultural and ecosystem preservation (Suriyankietkaew et al., 2022).

Effective strategic leadership can support HRM by adopting a transformation, adaptation and inclusion approach. Transformation in leadership enables structural changes in people management, by improving workforce competencies through training and development. Adaptation is important to maintain flexibility in the face of external dynamics, such as policy changes or environmental crises. Meanwhile, inclusion ensures the active involvement of all stakeholders, especially local communities, in decision-making (Qi et al., 2019). This approach is particularly relevant in Indonesia, where weak inter-

stakeholder coordination and limited local leadership capacity hinder the implementation of sustainability (Berliandaldo et al., 2021).

The current research gap lies in the lack of studies that explicitly examine the role of strategic leadership in sustainable tourism HRM in Indonesia. Most of the previous studies focus more on sustainability policies or technical aspects of tourism without paying attention to the vital role of HR in its implementation. Therefore, this research seeks to bridge the gap by examining how strategic leadership can be optimised to support sustainable HRM in Indonesian tourism destinations.

The novelty of this research lies in the systematic approach to the role of strategic leadership in the context of tourism human resources, by identifying competencies that need to be developed and how strategic leaders can create an organisational culture that supports sustainability principles. In addition, this research also emphasises the importance of collaboration between the government, local communities, and businesses in improving the quality of human resources in Indonesia's priority tourism destinations. It aims to create a framework that can be adopted by various parties involved in sustainable tourism management.

This research aims to explore how strategic leadership can play a role in sustainable tourism HRM in Indonesia. The main focus of this research is to identify approaches that can be used by strategic leaders to improve HR competencies in supporting sustainability principles, as well as creating an organisational culture that supports the implementation of sustainability in the tourism sector. In addition, this research aims to examine the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration between the government, local communities, and businesses in improving HR capacity for tourism sustainability in Indonesia's priority tourist destinations.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research uses a systematic literature review approach, which is a method that aims to identify, select, and analyse literature relevant to the research topic. This approach is used to provide a comprehensive, objective, and structured overview of the role of strategic leadership in HRM to support tourism sustainability in Indonesia. This systematic literature review will establish a strong theoretical foundation by identifying existing trends, exploring research gaps that have previously received less attention, and summarising important findings from the existing literature. According to (Snyder, 2019), a systematic literature review allows researchers to effectively identify research patterns and gaps in a particular field, and minimise bias in selecting literature.

The main objective of this systematic literature review is to identify and analyse the literature relevant to the research topic. The main focus is to explore the understanding of how strategic leadership can promote sustainability in the tourism sector through people management. This research aims to synthesise findings from existing studies to build a deeper understanding. In addition, this study also aims to identify research gaps that need to be addressed in the future, so as to provide a more applicable theoretical contribution to the development of sustainability strategies in the Indonesian tourism sector. (Lame, 2019) emphasised that a good systematic literature review should be able to critically identify relevant studies and include in-depth analysis.

To ensure the results of this literature review are valid and accountable, clear inclusion and exclusion criteria should be applied. Inclusion criteria include articles published in peer-reviewed academic journals, credible books, or research reports that focus on the topic of tourism sustainability and people management. Studies that address strategic leadership, multi-stakeholder collaboration, transformation in HRM, and tourism sustainability, especially those relevant to Indonesia and other developing countries, will be prioritised. Articles published within the last five to ten years will be selected to ensure currency of findings. Exclusion criteria include articles that are not relevant to the research topic

or that do not meet strict scientific quality standards, as well as articles that do not address the concept of strategic leadership in the context of tourism or do not link HRM to tourism sustainability.

Data collection will be done through a structured procedure by accessing various reputable academic databases, such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, ProQuest, ScienceDirect, and SpringerLink. The keywords used in the search include: "strategic leadership in tourism sustainability," "human resource management in tourism," "sustainable tourism in Indonesia," "multi-stakeholder collaboration in tourism," and "tourism leadership development." Only articles that meet the inclusion and exclusion criteria will be selected for further analysis. After that, each selected article will be evaluated based on methodological criteria (validity and reliability of the research design), as well as contribution to the research topic. Articles that provide new insights or enrich the understanding of tourism sustainability and HRM, as suggested by (Ramayanti, 2023), will be the main focus of this analysis.

The collected data will be analysed using thematic analysis method to identify key themes in the relevant literature. The first step is coding the data to identify key concepts, such as strategic leadership, HR transformation, tourism sustainability, and multi-stakeholder collaboration. Findings from different studies will be synthesised to identify key themes that focus on the contribution of strategic leadership to tourism sustainability. This process will also include critical analyses to evaluate existing research gaps, identify conflicting findings in the literature, and develop recommendations for further research. (Coker, 2021) stated that in-depth thematic analyses can distil relevant information to strengthen existing arguments and theories.

To ensure the validity of this systematic literature review, an evaluation will be conducted on an ongoing basis. An important step in this evaluation is source triangulation, which refers to the use of multiple literature sources (articles, books, reports) to ensure that the findings reflect a more holistic and balanced picture. In addition, expert cross-checking in the fields of strategic leadership and tourism sustainability will be conducted to ensure that the findings are appropriate and relevant to existing theory, and have clear links to practice on the ground. This is in line with the approach described by (Petticrew & Roberts, 2008) who emphasise the importance of validity in systematic literature synthesis.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This research aims to explore the role of strategic leadership in human resource management (HRM) to support tourism sustainability in Indonesia through a systematic literature review approach. Through analysing relevant literature, this research not only provides a deeper understanding of how strategic leadership can contribute to the sustainability of the tourism sector, but also identifies research gaps that need to be addressed. Based on this literature review, a number of drivers were found to be critical in achieving sustainability in tourism, with human resources being a key element in its implementation.

### ***The Role of Strategic Leadership in Tourism Sustainability***

From the literature review, it is clear that strategic leadership has a fundamental role in guiding and facilitating the implementation of sustainability policies in the tourism sector. According to (Wu et al., 2023), strategic leaders are responsible for formulating a long-term vision that focuses not only on economic growth, but also on environmental and socio-cultural preservation. Innovative leaders are able to integrate sustainability principles into tourism destination management strategies, by prioritising the empowerment of human resources who have the competence to consistently implement sustainability practices.

The importance of the role of strategic leadership was also emphasised by (Ennouari, 2024), who described how the success of strategic leadership in the Daraa-Tafilalt region, Morocco, successfully incorporated sustainability principles based on multi-stakeholder collaboration. Leadership in this area not only focuses on environmental aspects, but also seeks to empower local communities to actively

participate in sustainable tourism management. However, a major challenge in Indonesia is how to effectively manage human resources to support such sustainability initiatives. Many Indonesian tourist destinations still face difficulties in integrating sustainability principles in their daily practices (Wijaya et al., 2019; Hermawati, 2020).

### ***People Management for Sustainability***

Human resources (HR) play a very important role in the sustainability of the tourism sector. However, human resources often receive less attention in the development of sustainable tourism policies. (Baum, 2015) highlighted that proactive strategic leadership can improve HR competencies through training based on sustainability principles. Such training not only improves service quality, but also increases environmental awareness among the workforce, which in turn will accelerate the implementation of sustainability policies in the tourism sector.

On the other hand, (Piwowar-Sulej, 2021) stated that sustainable HR management, including sustainability training, will have a direct impact on the success of sustainability policies. However, although a number of sustainability policies have been implemented, the main challenge in HRM is the lack of awareness and competence of the workforce on sustainability issues. Many of Indonesia's tourist destinations have not yet trained their workforce to deal with environmental challenges such as climate change and the increasing expectations of travellers for eco-friendly destinations (Supriyanto, 2022). Therefore, more targeted and sustainability-based training is needed so that human resources can more effectively support sustainable tourism goals.

### ***Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration in Sustainability Management***

One factor that is no less important in realising tourism sustainability is multi-stakeholder collaboration, involving the government, local communities, and businesses. (Kuba et al., 2024) emphasised that an inclusive approach to tourism management can strengthen local community participation in sustainability. (Achmad et al., 2023) added that innovative leadership strategies based on collaboration between various parties can accelerate the implementation of sustainability policies and optimise the effectiveness of tourism destination management.

In Indonesia, effective collaboration between government, local communities and businesses is a major challenge, but also a key factor for successful implementation of sustainability policies. (Hamdan et al., 2021) showed that with solid collaboration, the quality of human resources can be improved and awareness of the importance of sustainability can be instilled among local communities and businesses. One approach that has proven effective is through joint training programmes, funded by the government and the private sector. This not only improves the competence of human resources but also strengthens community involvement in sustainable tourism destination management.

### ***Organisational Transformation in HR Management***

Organisational transformation based on sustainability is an important step in managing HR in the tourism sector. (Faeni et al., 2025) emphasise that successful organisations in sustainability HR management are those that are able to integrate sustainability values in all aspects of operations, including recruitment, training, and career development of the workforce. This transformation requires the use of digital technology to accelerate and simplify the HRM process. (Alqarni et al., 2023) also underlines the importance of e-HRM systems in improving efficiency and agility in sustainability-based workforce management.

However, this transformation process often faces obstacles, such as lack of resources and limited support from stakeholders. Therefore, strategic leaders must be able to build awareness and commitment to sustainability at every level of the organisation. This is in line with best practices applied in the global

tourism sector, which show that commitment from leaders and strong support from stakeholders are decisive factors in a successful sustainability-based HR transformation (UNWTO, 2018).

While there are many studies that address tourism sustainability, there are some research gaps that need to be addressed. One of them is the lack of research that directly links strategic leadership with HRM in the context of tourism sustainability, especially in Indonesian tourism destinations. Therefore, further research is needed to identify effective leadership models that can support sustainable HRM and its impact on long-term sustainability.

In addition, multi-stakeholder collaboration in tourism sustainability management also requires further research. Collaborative strategies involving all relevant parties, including local governments, businesses, and local communities, need to be developed to address existing sustainability challenges, particularly in tourism villages and local communities in Indonesia.

## CONCLUSION

This study aims to explore the role of strategic leadership in human resource management (HRM) to support tourism sustainability in Indonesia. Based on a systematic literature review, this study found that strategic leadership has a very important role in directing sustainability policies in the tourism sector, taking into account environmental, social and economic aspects. Visionary and innovative leaders can integrate sustainability in tourism destination management strategies, one of which involves empowering human resources to support the implementation of these policies. In addition, human resource management based on sustainability principles is the main key in realising sustainable tourism. Training and improving the competence of the workforce is needed to face environmental challenges and evolving tourist expectations.

Collaboration between the government, local communities, and businesses has also proven to be an important factor in creating sustainable tourism. Collaborative strategies involving all relevant parties, especially in the management of tourist destinations involving local communities, can strengthen awareness of the importance of sustainability. However, the biggest challenge that Indonesia faces is the lack of effective human resource management to support sustainability initiatives and the lack of coordination between stakeholders. Therefore, more targeted and sustainability-based HRM needs to be prioritised in future tourism policies. This research also identifies gaps in existing research, particularly regarding the direct relationship between strategic leadership and HRM in the context of tourism sustainability.

Based on the findings obtained in this study, several recommendations can be made for future research. First, future researchers are advised to focus more on developing an effective strategic leadership model in HRM to support tourism sustainability in Indonesia. Further research needs to identify more specific leadership strategies that can be applied in the context of Indonesia and other developing countries, especially to address existing sustainability challenges.

Second, future research should further explore multi-stakeholder collaboration in tourism sustainability management. Collaboration strategies that involve all relevant parties, including local governments, businesses, and local communities, need to be further developed. This is important to improve the effectiveness of sustainability policy implementation and ensure that all parties are actively involved in the management of tourism destinations.

Third, it is suggested that future research should examine the influence of sustainability-based organisational transformation on HRM, especially in terms of the integration of technology and e-HRM systems in facilitating and accelerating more sustainable HRM. This will provide deeper insights into how tourism organisations can manage HR more efficiently to support sustainability in the long term.

With these recommendations in mind, future research can make a greater contribution to designing more appropriate policies and strategies for tourism sustainability in Indonesia, as well as improving human resource management in the sector.

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