

### Brunei Darussalam's Green Tourism: An Overview

Nor Surilawana Sulaiman<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Halalan Thayyiban Research Centre, Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali, Sinaut Campus, KM33, Jln Tutong, TB1741, Brunei Darussalam surilawana.sulaiman@gmail.com

Abstract. In recent years, experts throughout the world have been concerned with the idea of green tourism, particularly in terms of sustainability. The high tourist interest in green tourism has significantly provided many opportunities for tourism stakeholders to improve their services and challenges for future development. This research investigates the principles and prospects of green tourism from diverse literature to fully grasp the application of concepts and other pertinent challenges in green tourism. This article investigates the principles of green tourism, as well as its components and possibilities for a green economy and sustainability. To accomplish this, hence, the paper will attempt to create a model for the growth of green tourism to accomplish sustainability. As a result of the following conclusion, every attraction built is expected to follow the paradigm of green tourism development.

**Keywords:** Brunei, eco-tourism, green economy, green tourism, sustainable

### 1 Introduction

Developing and developed nations have looked to tourism as a means of generating revenue. It is consistently recognised as the top or second-largest sector in many of these nations, such as Kenya, Hawaii, and Goa [1], due to its positive effects on the economy [2], the creation of jobs, and the balance of payments [3, 4]. Tourism is one of the industries with one of the fastest expanding economies, which some people rank third in the world behind oil and autos [2]. While, according to Harmimi [3], today's global economy is dominated by four mega businesses, with tourism being one of them., together with transportation, telecommunications, and technology. Nonetheless. The World Travel and Tourism Council states that tourism remains one of the most significant global sectors [4]. In short, tourism was a crucial source of funding for conservation initiatives and growing tourism revenue [5].

Brunei Darussalam (herein called Brunei) has amassed substantial wealth in the oil and gas sector, making it among the richest in the world [1]. For this reason, more people are familiar with Brunei as an oil-rich country than as a vacation destination [6]. Hence, they are driven by oil-derived affluence and relatively oblivious to development [1]. Generally speaking, Brunei Darussalam's tourism is, nevertheless, just in its beginning stages [7] or standstill [6].

However, Brunei's economic health is jeopardized due to the 1997 Asian financial crisis [1]. Therefore, it is imperative to transition the economy from an unsustainable

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oil and gas sector to a diversified, internationally competitive, and market-driven one. The government is looking at ways to accomplish economic development, including expanding the tourism sector [7]. Though statistics indicate an increase over two decades later, the precise effects of tourism on employment and investment and the nation's gross domestic product (GDP) remain uncertain [6]. On the contrary, in comparison to Brunei, neighbouring emerging nations like Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam have reported higher GDP percentage contributions [6].

Therefore, in order to encourage sustainable tourism, tourist attractions must be managed and operated efficiently [8]. The economic effect of tourism, among the three main effects, along with the socio-cultural and environmental effects, dominated the decision-making process [9]. The positive financial ramifications of tourism often eclipsed its detrimental socio-cultural and environmental effects [10]. Consequently, social and environmental deterioration ensued as an unforeseen consequence of the uncontrolled, unplanned infrastructure construction supporting the tourism industry in numerous countries [10].

Due to heightened consciousness of the detrimental environmental impacts of tourism, efforts have been undertaken to develop sustainable tourism practices. With the rise of green tourism and other sustainable, exciting tourism [3], the relationship between increased tourism and environmental degradation has garnered significant attention in the last twenty years [11]. Tourism has long been seen as an environmentally benign sector of the economy [12].

The tourist sector is aware of the rise in interest in green tourism among practitioners and scholars. The expected rise in interest in visiting new, eco-friendly locations will cause important new challenges to emerge that will majorly impact Brunei's tourist industry's growth. Brunei Darussalam undoubtedly possesses several distinctive attractions covering the niches of nature, culture, and legacy [6, 7], having a safe and secure reputation, a clean environment, and being pollution-free [7]. A comprehensive study of Brunei's tourism is needed to close this information gap. Hence, developing green tourism infrastructure, amenities, travel packages, and activities necessitates the knowledge of green tourism principles and components for both industry participants.

# 2 Methodology

The majority of the information gathered for this study came from grey literature sources that are currently accessible, such as official publications, news stories, and relevant authority websites or Facebook pages, particularly for information unique to Brunei. Furthermore, data from relevant papers, journals, proceedings, and other white literature was collected and examined for this work. This effort seeks to advance the body of literature by compiling and analysing the already available data. As the subtopic below indicates, the research focused on Brunei Darussalam.

Additionally, this report explores Brunei Darussalam's green tourism SWOT analysis. Given how well SWOT analysis captures internal strengths and weaknesses as well as external favourable and unfavourable situations in each environment or industry a corporation competes in, its widespread use is particularly clear [13, 14, 15, 16], which utilized to help the sector choose its strategic orientation [17]. According to Talib and Wahab [18], "SWOT analysis takes on a developmental outlook that leverages the

strengths, improves on the weaknesses, seizes the opportunities and be mindful of the threats".

## 3 Concept of Green Tourism

"Green" typically refers to one of the secondary colours created by mixing yellow and blue, which calms the eye, is present in plant leaves, and relieves tension [19]. Abdul Matin defines "green" as preserving and valuing nature [19]. Green has been used in many different industries and is widely regarded as having positive qualities [19] as well as being implemented [20]. For instance, green is associated with tourism, hence Green Tourism. Since the United Nations (UN) Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro legally endorsed the sustainable idea, one of the tourism goods that has existed and been widely promoted is green tourism [21, 22] with the adoption of the green economic strategy [21, 23].

To keep pace with the rapid technological improvements, the principles of "green" in its operations dictate efficiency and adequate resource utilisation [24, 20]. Following the guidelines established to safeguard natural ecosystems, maintain nature's capacity and provide for its preservation [20].

As a result of the global situation surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, an extensive range of goods and services are being provided to draw tourists from within and beyond the nation, even under the direct of situations. This trend of green tourism is also observed to be increasing quickly.

Prior to establishing a comprehensive definition of green tourism, it may be more advantageous to establish a clear definition of tourism. Tourism is defined by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) as the activities of individuals who travel to and remain in locations other than their usual surroundings for up to a year to engage in leisure, business, or other goals [25]. Meanwhile, Cook et al. [26] provide a definition of tourism as the short-term relocation of individuals to destinations distinct from their customary residences and working places and employment, encompassing the actions they undertake during their vacation and the corresponding infrastructure developed to fulfil their demands. Notably, travellers representing the demand side of the tourism industry entail the movement of individuals [27]. On the other hand, destinations, meaning the supply side, furnish activities or amenities to meet the demands of travellers [27].

The term "green tourism" refers to tourism activities that are favourable to the environment and can have a variety of different objectives and connotations [28, 10, 3]. Two goals for using these terms are: first, to inform clients that their next vacation destination is exotic [29], lovely and untainted [10]. Secondly, applying green tourism claims can prove that tourist-related activities in a location have no detrimental effects on the environment [12]. In broad terms, being a responsible traveller or offering responsible travel services are both parts of green tourism.

Tourism operators and businesses would find the concept of green tourism extremely enticing in light of the government's heightened pressure to adopt realistic and efficient environmental management practices [28]. Visits to natural areas that are fragile, untouched, and generally unchanged are included in this category of tourism. The

idea is to provide an alternative to the typical commercial tourism that is less intrusive and usually on a smaller scale [28].

Moreover, ecotourists consider green tourism an important effort to preserve areas that have mostly avoided human development for future generations' benefit [28]. Therefore, programs and activities that need to limit the harmful effects on the environment and preserve locals' cultural integrity are examples of responsible green tourism [10].

Bohdanowicz and Martinac asserted that tourism produces enormous volumes of non-durable goods, wastewater, energy, and carbon emissions, making it the most environmentally destructive industry [30]. Therefore, a crucial part of green tourism is evaluating environmental, social, and cultural concerns and advocating for waste recycling, energy saving and water conservation [31], and economic opportunity creation for the community. Due to these factors, green tourism is often attractive to socially conscious and environmental campaigners.

#### 4 Brunei Darussalam's Green Tourism

Ahmad [6] stated that Brunei's government recognised tourism's potential as early as the 1990s, as evidenced by official papers such as the country's National Development Plan. The government simultaneously reorganised the management of tourism development by appointing a new tourist director and elevating the department from a unit to a division. The first tourist master plan was also developed in the middle of the 1990s [32, 6]. This plan effectively identified the nation's capabilities and limitations in terms of tourism development [32, 6].

'Visit Brunei Year' was designed in 2001 to advance domestic tourism growth and to advertise Brunei as a travel destination abroad [33]. To coordinate efforts and further the development of tourism-related products and services, the Brunei Tourism Board was founded in 2005 [34]. To raise its international profile as a tourist destination, Brunei joined the UNWTO in November 2007 [35]. From 2011 to 2015, a new tourism master plan was created, providing an outline for the progressive development of 69 tourism initiatives [36].

Besides, 69 initiatives to improve Brunei's tourism industry were highlighted in the new plan during a session of the Legislative Council, according to the Minister of Industry and Primary Resources [37]. The initiatives encompass museum renovations, the establishment of Where proboscis monkeys are protected, tour guide workshop, the augmentation of tourism facilities in a distant community, and the construction of the Kampung Ayer Cultural and Tourism Gallery's second phase [37].

These initiatives show how eager the government is to promote tourism as a sector that may help diversify the nation's economy. One would think that Brunei Darussalam would use its advantageous geographic location in Southeast Asia, bordered by countries well-known for their tourism industries.

What's more, Brunei is surrounded by Malaysia and Indonesia on the island of Borneo, both of which have grown their tourism sectors long ago [1]. Its strategic location in Southeast Asia can provide a springboard to other popular Borneo ecotourism destinations, such as the Mulu Caves in northern Sarawak and the Mountain Kinabalu in Sabah [6, 7].

As an additional point of interest, Brunei Darussalam is a relatively tiny country that boasts a multitude of green tourist attractions. For instance, Mangrove Paradise Resort & Villa is popular with local and international tourists because it promotes seafood supplied by the resort's proprietors and resembles a floating house on the water like the 'Kampong Ayer Residence'. In addition, some residences in the form of homestays offer affordable lodging packages and local cuisine that have successfully boosted the number of visitors staying.

Besides, primary tropical forest covers between 78% [38] and 80% [7] out of the 5,769 square kilometres of nation land, and its National Forestry Policy designates permanent forest estates and forest reserves for 55% of the total land area [39]. Thus, for ecotourists, Brunei Darussalam offers intriguing and distinctive natural areas. [38, 7, 40].

Furthermore, as a coastal country, Brunei has 33 islands, most located inside a significant river or Brunei Bay; just two are offshore. While the bulk of these islands have not yet been developed, three are inhabited. Though some parts have been removed for cultivation, the deserted islands remain entirely covered in pure primary forest. Although there is not much flora or wildlife on most islands, several now host endangered species. [41].

Not only does Brunei have pristine rainforests in its national parks, such as Ulu Temburong and Merimbun, but it also has recreational forests in Berakas, Bukit Shahbandar, Bukit Subok, Sungai Liang, Luagan Lalak, and Peradayan, as well as other dynamic mangrove and marine ecosystems, such as those in Brunei Bay and Pelong Rocks. Given that they have been extensively kept and protected, these natural regions offer promise as green tourism destinations. The government governs the nation's protected areas, with the Department of Forestry overseeing most of them. The government has committed to keeping the country's forest in the greatest possible state of natural preservation. Several travel agencies have started packaged trips to the nation's natural areas as part of the tourist sector.

One such package is the "Tropical Forest Tour," which takes place in the rural Belait District and visits several locations, including the alluvial swamp of Luagan Lalak Recreational Park, the wild forest trails of Sungai Liang Recreational Park, and an Iban longhouse in Rempayoh. An alternative would be to spend the night in Ulu Temburong National Park, where guests can utilise elevated boardwalks to traverse the rainforest, observation huts and tree homes to spot wildlife and a canopied trail to gain a bird'seye view of the jungle. In addition to visiting numerous longhouses in Temburong, tourists can also gain exposure to indigenous culture by engaging in the traditional "ngajat" dance alongside local Iban people.

By November 29, 1984, Bangkok signed the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Declaration on Heritage Parks and Reserves, and Tasek Merimbun Heritage Park was named an ASEAN Heritage Site [42]. Tasek Merimbun Heritage Park was chosen from one nature reserve and nine other national parks in ASEAN because of its extraordinary attributes, variety, and exemplary ideals. Therefore, it should be maintained to conserve genetic diversity, guarantee sustainable use of ecosystems and species, preserve biological processes and life support systems, and retain wildness that is of aesthetic, cultural, educational, scientific, recreational, and tourism benefits [42].

In addition, Brunei received a score of 100 in the service area (including airports and places of worship) and 100 in the environment area (trust and security), as assessed

by the Mastercard Crescent Rating Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI 2021). Furthermore, Brunei Darussalam obtained scores of 72 for access (transport infrastructure), 67 for the environment (climate), and 55 for communication (communication ability). In terms of overall ranking within the service area, Brunei secured the sixth position. The evaluators' assessment of sites that deliver satisfactory service to Muslim tourists remains unchanged. However, in light of the disruptions in the tourism industry in 2021, this statistic is assessed using data from 2019. It is anticipated that a concerted effort from all stakeholders operating within the tourist sector will be dedicated to enhancing the calibre of services provided, hence elevating the visibility and standing of Brunei Darussalam on this index.

Although Brunei's tourism industry has a huge opportunity, there is room to focus on developing, innovating, and updating the tourism industry. In this manner, Brunei's potential to develop into a green tourism destination may be achieved. To do this, identification must begin with a SWOT analysis to implement the strategies and run optimally [43]. Furthermore, SWOT analysis can assist in identifying the variables that comprise an organization's strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities [44]. Based on the data collection, the factors were mapped in the SWOT matrix, particularly relevant to only Brunei's tourist sector. Table 1 below tabulated the SWOT matrix analysis that could influence the expansion of Brunei's tourist sector.

Table 1. SWOT Analysis for Brunei Tourism

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul> <li>Financial and Political Stability</li> <li>Diverse cultural heritage</li> <li>Unspoiled rainforest and natural resources</li> <li>Secure and protected</li> <li>Strategically placed</li> </ul>	Inadequate infrastructure, both public and private Lack of 'new' experience lack of qualified guides Standards for products and services Restricted knowledge and access to novel experiences Insufficiency of pre and post-arrival infor-
ODDODTUNITIES	mation
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
• Growth of the green tourist industry •	Natural hazards and the climate
<ul> <li>Fresh natural goods</li> </ul>	Disruptive world events
<ul> <li>Islamic and historical items</li> </ul>	identity differentiation dissolves
<ul> <li>Upgrading the infrastructure</li> </ul>	Interactional conflict between stakeholders
<ul> <li>Culture's preservation and continuation</li> </ul>	Utilizing resources excessively or exploiting them
<ul> <li>Increase stakeholder involvement</li> </ul>	
<ul> <li>Collaboration with neighboring countries</li> </ul>	

# 5 Prospects of Green Tourism in Brunei Toward Green Economy

According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), a green economy mitigates ecological scarcities and threats to a significant degree while enhancing social justice and human welfare [45]. The definition of a green economy entails prudent resource utilisation, minimal carbon dioxide emissions, and social inclusivity; these characteristics are significant in sustainable development [46]. In a green economy, the governmental and private investment that lowers pollutants and carbon emissions, increases resources and energy conservation and stops the loss of ecological services and biodiversity should be the primary drivers of growth in income and employment.

The green economy was one of the two focuses of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, in terms of sustainable development and poverty eradication. In the months leading up to Rio+20, discussions on the green economy were difficult, and the idea became a point of contention. Despite these obstacles, nations concurred at Rio+20 to position the green economy as a crucial instrument for long-term growth. One that is just, economic expansion, able to promote jobs, and the end of poverty, and can safeguard the health of the earth's natural ecosystems [47, 21]

There are several different issues in many developing nations where tourism has developed unrestrained and haphazardly. Undeniably, the region's socio-economic growth has been sustained due to the economic benefits of the tourist sector. Fortunately, according to the Seventh National Development Plan 1996-2000, Brunei's tourist industry cannot and should not be allowed ignored:

"In the Brunei context, tourism is a newly emerging industry. Promoting the tourism industry will fully preserve and respect the country's religious, moral and cultural values. To support the development of eco-tourism in particular, the over-exploitation of natural resources and environmental damage must be avoided." [48]

Former Minister of Brunei's Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism Dato Paduka Haji Ali bin Haji Apong emphasised in his inauguration speech for the International Seminar on Halal Tourism and Hospitality 2022 (ISHTaH 2022) that the industry's stakeholders extend beyond the Brunei Tourism Board, Tourism Development Department, Travel Agents Association, hotel operators, tour guides, restaurant operators, and public transportation operators. The general populace adheres to these admirable Islamic principles. This entails respecting visitors and tourists, keeping public spaces clean by disposing of trash in designated areas, and refraining from damaging or vandalising facilities built by the government and other parties.

The growth of the tourism industry must follow sustainable development principles and be long-term economically viable, ethical, and socially just for the local populace of the tourist locations. Therefore, beginning with the 6<sup>th</sup> National Development Plan, the government embraces the notion of sustainable development as the cornerstone of socioeconomic progress. In this respect, the nation aspires "to maximise the economic utilisation of national resources" and "to preserve a clean and healthy environment" [48]. Stephen mentions that Government representatives affirm that Brunei's objective is to develop sustainable tourism, one that considers both the environment and the culture as well as the country's way of life [7].

Besides, humans are responsible for protecting the environment, as the Khalifah (caliph) on Earth is, since they are endowed with thoughts and sentiments. [24, 20]. Building a tranquil, affluent, and equitable culture is what being a caliph means rather than destroying and bleeding blood. The al-Qur'an provides a vivid illustration of this idea [20] as stated in Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 30, as follows:

"Remember when your Lord said to the angels: 'Verily I want to make a caliph on the face of the earth.' They said: 'Why do you want to make (caliph) on earth a person who will cause damage to him and shed blood, even though we always praise You and sanctify You?' The Lord said: 'Verily I know what you do not know'.'

The above verse directs people to act in a way that benefits the planet they live on and doesn't harm the environment, like by engaging in agricultural, plantation, and fishing operations. Additionally, Allah swt expressly forbids any universe annihilation as stated in Surah Al-Ruum verse 41:

"It has been seen that the damage on land and at sea was caused by the actions of human hands so that Allah will feel for them a part of (the result) of their actions so that they will return (to the right path)."

Human functions as the caliphates to drive progress that prospers the world are interrupted by the damaged environmental conditions, making them vulnerable to failure [46]. The state of the environment around us and the quality of our human resources are interdependent. [49]. Hence, humans are accountable for their actions and must act to repair them.

Thus, green tourism is one of the actions that are anticipated to lead to tourism's sustainable development and considerably increase its natural competitiveness globally [50]. However, green tourism services have not yet established themselves as a competitive advantage for their respective countries, even though if managed professionally, this industry may significantly impact the economy [50]. For instance, improved human resources benefit labour competition among ASEAN countries, increasing the community's income. Additionally, government support through good policies will encourage positive participation from local communities. Moreover, infrastructure development also supports accelerating the growth of the tourism industry [50]. Leiper's Tourism System broadly conceptualises the tourism industry structure. It is one of the most commonly acknowledged and well-known models when attempting to comprehend the tourist system. [51]. A tourism destination must effectively manage three fundamental elements: the region (area and attractions), the visitor, and the destination information. [3]. Hence, the elements that should be considered for a place that promotes green tourism are shown in Table 2.

Destination's Element

Location of traveller

• safeguarded nature
• preserved resources
• safeguarded species
• accessibility to green food
• cultural heritage conservation
• green resorts

Tourists

• eco-friendly lodging

Table 2. Element of Green Destination

	<ul> <li>minimizing trash</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>reduce energy use</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>lessen water usage</li> </ul>
Information	<ul> <li>Authentic and accurate information</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>green destination marketing</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>promoting local green products and services</li> </ul>

Adopted: [3]

In Brunei, there is generally a genuine desire to promote and grow tourism [6]. The government has even announced several programmes to boost tourism growth [6]. Although the tourist industry has performed well, it has not been impressive enough to persuade the nation's leaders that tourism would be a significant economic driver in the coming years [6]. According to Ku, the future of the tourism sector is still unclear [52].

## 6 Green Tourism in Brunei Toward Sustainable Development

In the green economy, tourism that can be maintained or perpetuated indefinitely in its social, economic, cultural, and environmental context is called "sustainable tourism" [53, 54]. Tourism that fully considers past, present and future economic, sociocultural, and ecological effects is known as sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism considers the demands of tourists, the economy, the environment, and host communities [55].

According to Peršić-Živadinov and Blažević [56], the tourism sector needs to embrace the idea of sustainability and going green. However, the terms "green" and "sustainable" are interchangeable for this essay. Although a "green economy" does not replace sustainable development, it is becoming increasingly clear that attaining sustainability depends mainly on having a sound economic system. The greening of the economy is now necessary to achieve sustainability, which is still a critical long-term goal [45].

The government needs to take further action due to the lack of a sustainable government policy that balances the ideas of industrial estates with the notion of green sectors [24]. Green tourism itself emphasizes the environmental aspects. So, to protect the natural ecosystem, the green element should consider environmental issues [20].

The major stakeholders in the tourism sector comprise the transportation (airlines, cruises, buses, and trains), the lodging or hospitality (green hotels, beach resorts, homestays, etc.), the food and drink or catering, the infrastructure for attractions and entertainment, and the infrastructure for education and healthcare [57]. Each element relates to the tourist sector and is responsible for a different SDG [57].

SDG 13 Climate Action, SDG Goal 14 Life Below Water, and SDG Goal 15 (Life on Land) must be considered to achieve a green economy. Brunei's green tourism can substantially contribute to attaining these three Sustainable Development Goals by implementing the aforementioned green component destination. [57].

In addition, based on the basic principles of green tourism towards sustainable tourism, a tri-dimensional model for sustainable green tourism is constructed in Figure 1 below to show the relationships of every aspect that impacted green tourism.

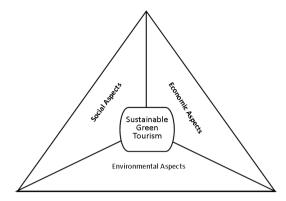


Fig. 1. Radial dimension Model of Sustainable Green Tourism Adopted: [58, 59]

Some strategies to develop a sustainable tourism sector include bolstering and guaranteeing the sustainability of currently offered tourism products while adding more specialised activity-based tourism, such as sports, adventure, bird watching, diving, and cultural and community-based tourism. Community-based tourism has grown in popularity to this point, especially at eco-friendly locations like Sumbiling Eco Village in the Temburong District, Eco Ponies Garden in the Tutong District, and Kampong Sungai Bunga in Kampong Ayer (Water Village), Brunei-Muara District.

Their strategies towards sustainability have paid off as, in 2020, the Urban ASEAN sustainable tourism category at the "ASEAN Sustainable Tourism Award" (ASTA) ceremony was won by Kampong Ayer in Brunei Darussalam [60]. This award recognises stakeholders' cooperative efforts to mitigate the negative effects of the rapid growth in tourism on the environment or society. The same year, the 'ASEAN Clean City Award' was given to Bangar Town of Temburong District [61]. A commitment to sustainable tourism has also been shown by the private sector, as evidenced by the Radisson Hotel and Ulu-Ulu Resort being awarded the "ASEAN Green Hotel Award" in January 2018 and January 2020 in recognition of their work in energy efficiency, the usage of ecofriendly products, and community service [61, 62]. Besides, Tutong District in Brunei has recently won the ASEAN Clean Tourist City title for 2022–2024 [63].

#### 7 Conclusion

The discussion of green tourism was the sole topic covered in this study. And its relation to the green economy as well as prospects. Future research was anticipated to examine green tourism practices that have emerged in the area for evaluation in Brunei, which continues to engage in environmental protection and cultural observation. These results will undoubtedly be valuable to scholars, educators, policy implementers, and policy-makers in the field of tourism. The study's findings might also strengthen other widely accepted tourist paradigms because of the difference between Brunei's socioeconomic, cultural and political context and other tourist destinations.

Most importantly, governmental organisations in this sector may use the data as a baseline for future tourism growth, planning, and decision-making. Any inefficient strategies employed in developing and planning the tourism sector may be changed for the better, supporting sustainable tourism expansion. In the long run, it is envisaged that this would result in the eventual realisation of national goals for diversifying its economy away from oil and gas.

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