Article

Challenges in Integrating Sustainable Tourism Areas in Pekanbaru City: A Joined-up Governance Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Tourism development is one of the national development priorities, in line with the Pekanbaru City Regional Tourism Development Master Plan (RIPPARDA) 2021-2036, which promotes sustainable tourism integration. Pulau Semut, DuRanch, Danau Buatan, and Taman Bunga Okura have the potential to be developed into an integrated tourism, however, it still faces several obstacles and challenges. This study aims to analyze the integration of sustainable tourism areas in Pekanbaru City through a joined-up governance strategy. This study used a qualitative descriptive method, with primary data collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions, and secondary data obtained from documentation. The findings show that the integration of tourism areas has not been running optimally. Policy coherence is still low because RIPPARDA has not been translated into Decrees, Standard Operating Procedures, and joint action plans. Inter-institution coordination has taken place, but it remains limited to communication and has not yet resulted in sustained joint action. Institutional integration remains weak because there is no formal and permanent forum to coordinate the four areas. Alignment of goals has only been formed at the vision level and has not yet been translated into targets, indicators, priorities, and shared benefit schemes. This study emphasizes the importance of strengthening governance through cross-sector policies, formal coordination mechanisms, permanent institutional arrangements, and measurable joint action plans as the foundation for realizing integrated and sustainable tourism area governance in Pekanbaru City.

Keywords: Tourism Destination; Integration of Tourism Destination; Sustainable Tourism; Tourism Development; Joined-up Governance.

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ABSTRAK

Pengembangan pariwisata menjadi salah satu prioritas pembangunan nasional yang sejalan dengan Rencana Induk Pembangunan Pariwisata Daerah Kota Pekanbaru (RIPPARDA) 2021-2036 dalam mendorong integrasi wisata berkelanjutan. Pulau Semut, DuRanch, Danau Buatan, dan Taman Bunga Okura memiliki potensi untuk dikembangkan sebagai kawasan wisata terintegrasi, akan tetapi masih menghadapi beberapa hambatan dan kendala. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis integrasi kawasan wisata berkelanjutan di Kota Pekanbaru melalui strategi *joined-up governance*. Penelitian menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan pengumpulan data primer melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam, *focus group discussion*, dan data sekunder dari dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa integrasi kawasan wisata belum berjalan optimal. Koherensi kebijakan masih rendah karena RIPPARDA belum diturunkan menjadi Surat Keputusan, Standar Operasional Prosedur, dan rencana aksi bersama. Koordinasi antar lembaga telah berlangsung, tetapi masih terbatas pada komunikasi, dan belum menghasilkan tindakan bersama yang berkelanjutan. Integrasi kelembagaan masih lemah karena belum tersedia forum formal dan permanen yang mengkoordinasikan keempat kawasan. Keselarasan tujuan baru terbentuk pada tingkat visi dan belum diterjemahkan menjadi target, indikator, prioritas serta skema manfaat bersama. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya penguatan *joined-up governance* melalui kebijakan lintas sektor, mekanisme koordinasi formal, kelembagaan permanen, dan rencana aksi bersama terukur sebagai fondasi untuk mewujudkan tata kelola kawasan wisata terintegrasi dan berkelanjutan di Kota Pekanbaru.

Kata Kunci: Destinasi Wisata; Integrasi Destinasi Wisata; Wisata Berkelanjutan; Pengembangan Wisata; Tata Kelola Terpadu.

1. Introduction

Globally, international tourism continued to grow, with an estimated 1.52 billion international tourist arrivals recorded in 2025, a 4% increase from 2024 (UN Tourism, 2026), while neighbouring countries such as Malaysia welcomed a record 42.2 million foreign visitors (VnExpress International, 2026), and Thailand recorded around 33 million foreign arrivals (Bernama, 2026). In Indonesia, foreign tourist visits reached 15.39 million in 2025, a 10.80% increase from 2024 and the highest level since the pandemic, with ASEAN countries contributing 41.3% of the total (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2026). Developing the tourism sector has become a strategic priority for many regions in Indonesia, including Pekanbaru City. At the local level, the Pekanbaru City Government directs tourism development through the Pekanbaru City Regional Tourism Development Master Plan 2021-2036, which emphasizes the importance of developing integrated and sustainable tourist destinations with community participation in managing tourism resources (Pemerintah Kota Pekanbaru, 2021). As a positive impact of this development direction, there has been an increase in the number of foreign tourist visits to Riau, especially in Pekanbaru City, reaching 27,185 visits in September 2025, an increase of 5.12% compared to August 2025 (Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Pekanbaru, 2025). This confirms that tourism in Pekanbaru City has great potential for development.

Tourism areas in Pekanbaru City, namely Pulau Semut, DuRanch, Danau Buatan, and Taman Bunga Okura, have great potential for development through an integrated tourism program that leverages the unique characteristics of each site (Lusiana, 2024). Pulau Semut has great potential as an ecotourism destination based on Malay cultural wisdom, DuRanch has the potential to be an agrotourism area, Danau Buatan offers natural potential and water sports, and Taman Bunga Okura offers mangrove forest education. The integration of these four tourism areas can ensure sustainable management, strengthen synergy between areas, and create equitable distribution of economic benefits for the community. To realize this potential, integrated management between the four tourist attractions is necessary. More recent Indonesian research

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has also identified policy fragmentation and overlapping responsibilities as challenges for integrated destination governance (Hajar et al., 2026)

Previous research shows that collaboration between pentahelix actors in the development of Pulau Semut is running well (Fatmawati & Andriani, 2024). However, when integration was carried out with three other tourist attractions, namely DuRanch, Danau Buatan, and Taman Bunga Okura, there were significant obstacles. One of the main obstacles is the lack of optimal integration between the four tourist attractions, with each location being managed separately without strong synergy between the related parties. In addition, another challenge is the sustainability of tourism development, which is hampered by the lack of implementation of sustainability principles and minimal active community participation. The sustainability of this development is highly dependent on the ability to integrate management that involves all stakeholders in a coordinated manner. Other research has focused on the development of a single tourism destination, namely Pulau Semut (Anggraini et al., 2023; Nielwaty et al., 2025; Suwarno et al., 2022) but has not yet addressed macro aspects such as connectivity between tourist destinations beyond Pulau Semut, nor has it comprehensively discussed cross-regional integration strategies. The novelty of this research lies in the application of joined-up governance as an instrument to integrate four tourism destinations that have unique and diverse characteristics.

Based on this explanation, the researcher formulated the research question: "How is the integration of sustainable tourism areas in Pekanbaru City achieved through a joined-up governance strategy?". This study aims to analyze the sustainable integration of the Pulau Semut, DuRanch, Danau Buatan, and Taman Bunga Okura tourism areas through a joined-up governance strategy. There is a need for improvements in the integration of the management of tourism areas, which are still fragmented, in order to increase tourism attractiveness and economic benefits for local communities. This research supports the achievement of SDGs 1 and 8 through strengthening the sustainable tourism sector that is oriented towards empowering local communities and increasing employment opportunities, as well as Asta Cita 3 and 5 through the development of integrated tourism areas that promote ecotourism, agrotourism, nature tourism, and educational tourism that encourage community independence. From the perspective of national research policy, this research is relevant to the 2017-2045 National Research Master Plan in the field of social humanities, particularly in strengthening collaboration-based and sustainable development governance.

2. Joined-up Governance

Joined-up governance is a governance approach that emphasizes policy integration, cross-sector coordination, and multi-stakeholder collaboration within a unified decision-making framework, to address complex issues that cannot be resolved through conventional sectoral approaches (Pollitt, 2003). In its development, "joined-up governance" has often been associated with the "whole-of-government" concept, which emphasizes the importance of horizontal cooperation among institutions to enhance the effectiveness of implementation of public policy. This approach is used to strengthen policy integration in sectors characterized by cross-cutting issues, such as the environment, health, and tourism. The joined-up governance approach also emphasizes the creation of structures or mechanisms that facilitate effective collaboration (Aoki et al., 2023). In the context of sustainable tourism, joined-up governance is identified as a way to build integrated governance so that the management of sustainable tourism areas no longer runs separately between stakeholders. The success of integration is measured through core indicators: policy coherence and shared targets, institutions or teams, and clear management. The final impact is assessed on indicators of regional sustainability, namely an improved environment, a strengthened local economy, and increased socio-cultural acceptance (Ansell & Gash, 2008). Empirical evidence from the tourism sector shows that this approach can work in practice. Australia was applied a joined-up governance approach to local government tourism

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management through the Managing Local Tourism Master Class, implemented in the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales and Perth's Eastern Metropolitan Region, and found that it provided a mechanism to increase collaboration and to leverage the benefits of working more effectively within and across councils. However, the study also found that political and administrative impediments to improved collaboration remained, which reinforces the need for a formal and coordinated governance framework such as the one proposed in this research (Dredge et al., 2011).

This strategy was chosen as a key approach to breaking down bureaucratic barriers and creating integration of policies, programs, and services between tourism destinations. Through joined-up governance, the four tourist destinations are no longer seen as separate entities, but rather as an integrated tourist area. This model is expected to provide a comprehensive framework for policymakers to manage the complexities of sustainable tourism development. The indicators of joined-up governance in this study can be explained as follows:

Table 1. Joined-up Governance Indicators

No	Aspects	Indicator	Focus
1	Substantive (policy content)	Policy Coherence	Level of alignment between policies as documents/decisions
2	Structural-relational (process)	Inter-Institutional Coordination	Quality of work interactions between agencies
3	Structural-relational (form)	Institutional Integration	The existence of a formal platform or structure for collaboration
4	Substantive (policy direction)	Alignment of Goals	Alignment of direction and targets among actors

Source: Poliitt (2003).

3. Method

The type of research used in this study is descriptive research with qualitative methods. Qualitative research aims to understand the phenomena of what is experienced by research subjects (Moleong, 2007). The researcher used a descriptive qualitative method because the researcher wanted to explain or describe a collaboration phenomenon and structural obstacles in the integration of sustainable tourism areas in Pekanbaru City through a joined-up governance strategy. The study was conducted in Pekanbaru City, focusing on four tourism areas slated for integration: Pulau Semut, DuRanch, Danau Buatan, and Taman Bunga Okura. The location was selected because Pekanbaru City possesses significant potential to develop sustainable tourism areas that combine diverse tourism attractions with educational elements.

The data collected in this study comprises both primary and secondary data. Primary data refers to information gathered directly by the researcher through fieldwork. This data was collected of field observations, in-depth interviews, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Passive participatory field observations were conducted, involving visits to the sites to directly observe accessibility, connecting infrastructure, and supporting facilities that integrate the four tourism areas, as well as gain firsthand insight into management processes, stakeholder interactions, and the challenges associated with integrating these areas. In-depth interviews with 10 informants were conducted between June and July 2026. They were interviewed in their capacity as policymakers and regulators from relevant city Government agencies, private sector, and managers of Kelompok Sadar Wisata (Pokdarwis) of the four tourism areas. The interview sampling technique used was purposive sampling. This technique helps researchers select interviewees based on the research topic. Primary data was also obtained through Focus Group Discussion (FGD) activities, which aimed to confirm data with all stakeholders.

The FGD was held on 16 July 2026 in Pekanbaru City. It involved 26 participants who were directly engaged in the development of the four tourism areas: including the Assistant for Economic Affairs and Development and the Expert Staff for Government, Law, and Politics of the Pekanbaru City Government, representative each from the Culture and Tourism Agency, the

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Agriculture and Fisheries Agency, the Environment and Sanitation Agency, the Transportation Agency, the Regional Disaster Management Agency, the Head of Rumbai Timur Sub-district and the Head of Limbungan Village, one manager each of Pulau Semut, DuRanch, Danau Buatan, Taman Bunga Okura, four community representatives living around the tourism areas, and the Chair of Jaringan Desa Wisata (Jadesta). The FGD results were then triangulated with field observations, in-depth interview data, and document analysis.

Meanwhile, secondary data is various information that already exists and is deliberately collected by researchers, which is used to complete research data needs. This secondary data was sourced from various materials, including books, Government publications, reports, journals, and websites relevant to the information being sought. The data were analysed using interactive analysis techniques developed by Miles and Huberman, starting from data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles et al., 2014). In this study, the four techniques were applied systematically. (1) Data collection. The researchers collected as much data as possible on the phenomenon of tourism area integration through field observations, in-depth interviews, FGD, and documentation. This technique was considered complete once data on the potential for integrating the four tourism areas were available from all four sources. (2) Data reduction. The researchers formulated critical questions on each stakeholder's policies regarding the integration of the tourism areas and built them into the FGD question guide, so that the discussion produced data that could be reduced more easily. This stage resulted in data that were arranged systematically. (3) Data display. The researchers then focused on deepening the findings and examining the joined-up governance strategy in integrating the tourism areas. The categories were organized into narrative descriptions comparing the perspectives of the Government, tourism area managers, the community, and the private sector across the four tourism areas, so that the data were organised into several categories. (4) Conclusion drawing and verification. The researchers interpreted the patterns and relationships among categories to conclude. These conclusions were verified by cross-checking the findings across data sources (observation, in-depth interviews, FGD, and documents) and through the summary and clarification session at the end of the FGD, so that each finding can be traced back to the collected data.

4. Results

4.1. Environmental Branding Strategies

Currently, Pekanbaru City is one of the main centers of economic growth in the central Sumatra region. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency in 2025, Pekanbaru City has characteristics of an urban area with economic activities dominated by the trade, services, construction, and public service sectors (Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Riau., 2025). This condition gives Pekanbaru a great opportunity to develop the tourism sector. In the context of regional development, the tourism sector in Pekanbaru City has experienced a change in orientation from previously emphasizing urban tourism based on artificial facilities (urban tourism) to a more sustainable tourism approach by utilizing the potential of nature, culture, and local communities. This paradigm shift is in line with the development of the concept of sustainable tourism, which not only aims to increase the number of tourists but also pays attention to aspects of environmental sustainability, community empowerment, and distribution of economic benefits to local communities.

The increase in tourist visits to Pekanbaru city was spread across 30 tourist destinations officially registered with the Pekanbaru City Culture and Tourism Agency. Among these destinations, four river-based tourism areas in the East Rumbai Region, namely Pulau Semut, DuRanch, Danau Buatan, and Taman Bunga Okura, have strong potential to be developed into a tourism integration program in Pekanbaru City. The four tourist attractions have different characteristics. Pulau Semut has the attraction of the Siak River panorama and a natural

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atmosphere that is still relatively well-maintained with shady trees, local community activities with a Malay village atmosphere, and a fishing area. Furthermore, DuRanch's attractions lie in its agrotourism, durian gardens on the banks of the Siak River, and a horse-riding activity of national and international caliber (May, 2024). Danau Buatan has the attraction of water tourism and family recreation (Pemerintah Kota Pekanbaru, 2024). Taman Bunga Okura is a tourist destination on the banks of the Siak River, based on the first flower garden in Riau Province, which provides a combination of garden tourism, camping areas, and agricultural education (Ibrahim et al., 2025).

Table 2. Tourism Potential and Observation Findings

No.	Tourism Area	Potential and Main Attractions	Observation Result Condition
1	Pulau Semut	Island tourism in the middle of the city on the banks of the Siak River, shady trees, local community activities with a Malay village atmosphere, and fishing areas	The area is still visited by the public. Activities seen include fishing, gathering, and local community activities around the river area
2	DuRanch	Educational tourism, durian orchards, the banks of the Siak River, and horse-riding tourism of national and international caliber	At the time of observation, the area was not operational and there were no guards. The horse riding, and garden activities that were previously part of the tourist attraction are no longer operating
3	Danau Buatan	The natural landscape area has an area of 150 hectares and has water tourism potential	At the time of observation, the area was not operational, and there were no guards. The horse riding and garden activities that were previously part of the tourist attraction are no longer operating
4	Taman Bunga Okura	The first flower tourism in Riau, camping, and agricultural education, recorded visitors >15,000 people at the 2025 Pacu Sampan Festival	The area is still active and continues to develop several activities. Camping areas, tent rentals, and MSME activities are available, and flowers are still available

*Source: Field Observation Results (*2026*)*

The diverse character of the four regions can essentially be an important asset for the development of sustainable tourism integration in Pekanbaru City. However, observation results show that operational conditions, tourism activities, and management patterns in each area still vary greatly. Taman Bunga Okura and Pulau Semut show directly observable and relatively active tourism activities, while DuRanch still faces operational sustainability issues. Danau Buatan presents a different set of issues, as its management involves multiple parties without a unified management system. This condition confirms that the readiness of the four areas to be integrated is not at the same level, so the integration analysis needs to consider actual conditions, management sustainability, accessibility, availability of activities, and the character of specific problems in each tourist area

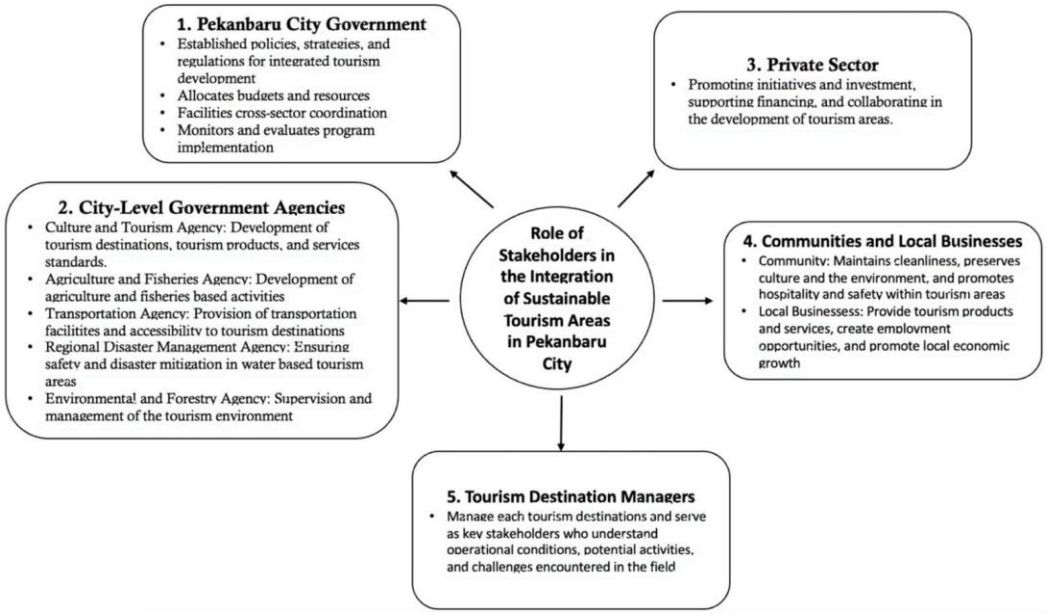
4.2. Initial Mapping of Actors in Tourism Area Integration

The integration of sustainable tourism areas in Pekanbaru City involves various actors with distinct positions and roles. Based on the interview results, the identified actors came from elements of the Pekanbaru City Government, regional apparatus, the private sector, managers of each tourist attraction, the community, and local business actors. The Pekanbaru City Government has an important position in providing policy support and building coordination between regional agencies. Among these agencies, the Culture and Tourism Agency is directly involved in the development of destinations, tourism products, and service standards. The Agriculture and Fisheries Agency is involved in the development of agricultural-based activities, while the Transportation Agency plays a role in providing tourism transportation facilities and accessibility. The Regional Disaster Management Agency is responsible for safety and disaster mitigation in water tourism areas, and the Environment and Forestry Agency is responsible for monitoring and managing the tourism environment. In the private sector, PT Pertamina Patra

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Niaga North Sumatra Regional through the Sei Siak Fuel Terminal has been identified as one of the actors that has played a role in encouraging discussions regarding the integration of tourism areas. At the destination level, each area has managers who carry out activities and face different issues. The managers of Pulau Semut, DuRanch, Danau Buatan, and Taman Bunga Okura are key players because they have knowledge of the operational conditions, potential activities, and constraints of each tourist attraction. In addition, local communities and business actors have an important position because tourism activities take place in spaces that are also part of the community's life and economic activities. Cross-sector collaboration research emphasizes that differences in authority, incentives, and accountability must be addressed when public agencies, private actors, and communities work together (Bryson et al., 2006).

Figure 1. Initial Actor Mapping in Tourism Area Integration



Source: Researcher Processed Data (2026)

Research finding indicate that the integration of the four regions was previously discussed through a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) involving several stakeholders and initiated by PT Pertamina Patra Niaga Regional North Sumatra through the Sei Siak Fuel Terminal on August 14, 2024. This activity is part of the company's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program. This activity aims to combine Pulau Semut, DuRanch, Danau Buatan, and Taman Bunga Okura into one concept of a river cruise tour package using a traditional boat, with projected benefits for approximately 50 beneficiaries from four tourist groups, while also being linked to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the aspects of poverty alleviation, decent work, and economic growth (Parasriau.com, 2024). However, field observations and interviews conducted by the researcher reveal that, following the event, no follow-up mechanism has been established to consistently translate the integration concept into a planned, structured, and sustainable joint program.

4.3. Joined-up Governance Strategy in Integration Tourism Areas in Pekanbaru City

4.3.1. Policy Coherence

Policy coherence refers to the extent to which policies made in various agencies support each other and do not conflict with each other in achieving a common goal. Based on the regulatory aspect, there is a basis and policy direction for integrated tourism destination development through Pekanbaru City Regional Regulation Number 1 of 2021 concerning the Pekanbaru City Regional Tourism Development Master Plan (RIPPARDA) 2021–2036. Normatively, the RIPPARDA provides a framework for integrating tourism areas in Pekanbaru City, ensuring that

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the development of tourist attractions is not merely isolated but is instead directed toward fostering connectivity between these areas. However, research findings indicate that this regulatory framework has not yet been translated into operational policies binding the four specific tourism areas: Pulau Semut, DuRanch, Danau Buatan, and Taman Bunga Okura. Furthermore, the outcomes of the 2024 Focus Group Discussion (FGD) have not yet been codified into technical, binding derivative regulations such as Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for river-cruise safety, operational permits for river tourism transport, or cooperation agreements between the tourism areas.

The Pekanbaru City Culture and Tourism Agency stated that a tourism integration program has been planned; however, there have been no further agreements after the FGD, nor have the necessary policy instruments for its implementation been established. This is as stated by the Secretary of the Pekanbaru City Culture and Tourism Agency:

> *"It hasn't been implemented yet because there are still quite a few obstacles, especially regarding our natural environment, especially since the Siak River is the deepest river. There have been initiatives and innovations to integrate tourism areas through river routes, but there are no permits or Standard Operating Procedures yet" (individual interview: June 25, 2026).*

The same condition was conveyed by the Pekanbaru City Transportation Agency. The Transportation Agency stated that there are already a number of transportation facilities, such as ports, water buses, speed boats, and crossing facilities. However, these facilities have not been utilized as part of an integrated tourism program. Informants from the Transportation Agency stated that follow-up to the FGD results stopped at the discussion stage. There are no Decrees, Standard Operating Procedures, regulations, or follow-up policies that form the basis for implementing the program's sustainability. As stated by the Pekanbaru City Transportation Agency:

> *"The water bus is already available, and we've prepared the port in Tuan Kadi and the floating port in Sungai Duku. We also have hourly boats that reach these points. Regarding the specifics, the results of the FGD agreement aren't yet available. The head of the agency has also moved. There's been a leadership transition. There's no decree, so there's no policy or follow-up" (individual interview: June 18, 2026).*

In terms of disaster management, the Pekanbaru City Regional Disaster Management Agency stated the need to install evacuation signs, provide rescue equipment, and establish requirements for officers operating water tourism. However, this recommendation has not been followed. The Pekanbaru City Regional Disaster Management Agency has not yet prepared a specific safety SOP for tourism activities. The Pekanbaru City Regional Disaster Management Agency conveyed this:

> *"Monitoring the development of Pulau Semut must be followed up by installing evacuation signs in the event of a disaster. Furthermore, we recommend that tourism managers, including those operating the site, prepare for rescue operations. To date, there has been no follow-up, and there are no standard operating procedures (SOPs) in place" (individual interview: July 7, 2026).*

These findings show that the coherence of integrated tourism development policies in Pekanbaru City has only reached the normative coherence stage but has not yet reached operational coherence as required in the joined-up governance framework. From this perspective, policy coherence is not only measured by the availability of planning documents (RIPPARDA), but must also be reflected in the interconnectedness of cross-sectoral technical instruments, such as safety SOPs, operational permits for river tracing programs, financing mechanisms, and partnership schemes with the private sector that actually bind each agency and actor to act in harmony towards common goals. Similar findings in other Indonesian tourism destinations identify vertical and horizontal policy fragmentation as constraints to coherent destination governance (Hubner et al., 2026).

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4.3.2. Inter-Institutional Coordination

Inter-institutional coordination describes the effectiveness of working relationships between the agencies and actors involved. In a collaborative governance context, coordination is not only in the form of communication, but also the ability of actors to produce decisions, division of tasks, use resources, implementation of activities, and engage in joint problem-solving. The research results show that inter-institutional coordination has developed at the communication level, but is not yet effective at the implementation level. The FGD activity is a prime example of coordination between existing institutions. The forum successfully brought together actors and produced integrated tourism ideas. However, the forum has not been optimal in producing a clear program plan, division of responsibilities, implementation targets, and licensing mechanisms after the FGD. As a result, each agency returned to carrying out its sectoral duties. In addition to the FGD activities, the study found relatively real coordination in the implementation of the sampan racing festival on Pulau Semut in 2023, and Taman Bunga Okura in 2025. According to the management of Taman Bunga Okura, the festival attracted more than 15,000 visitors and had an impact on MSME activities (Darmawan, 2025). In implementing this activity, the management of Pulau Semut was involved as a committee. The success of the festival shows that coordination can work when actors have clear activities, definite implementation times, and benefits that can be shared. However, this coordination is still activity-based and has not yet developed into integrated tourism area management.

Furthermore, interview data shows that communication patterns between tourism managers and the Government are quite intensive through digital chat groups, tourism awareness groups (pokdarwis), tourism village networks (Jadesta), direct communication with government agencies, and activity meetings. However, this communication has not yet resulted in the implementation of a tourism integration program. As stated by the manager of Pulau Semut:

> *"We're in constant communication with the management of Taman Bunga Okura. We've also maintained excellent communication with the Culture and Tourism Agency, continuing to coordinate any needs we may have. However, there hasn't been a concrete response specifically regarding the tourism integration program" (individual interview: July 9, 2026).*

Taman Bunga Okura management stated that coordination with the Government had been carried out through various forums, including WhatsApp groups with tourism agencies and groups, tourism associations, the Jadesta Nusantara forum consisting of national and international tourism groups (Pokdarwis), STP Riau, the Ministry, Dunia Melayu Dunia Islam, and the Sports Committee. This shows the availability of a wide communication network. However, it does not guarantee the implementation of the tourism integration program. The DuRanch manager conveyed a similar condition. DuRanch is indeed connected to Jadesta and can provide visitors with information about other tour packages. However, the traditional boat tour program connecting DuRanch to Taman Bunga Okura has not yet been implemented. The following is a statement from the DuRanch manager:

> *"The FGD explained the tourism integration program, a traditional boat trip from DuRanch to Okura Flower Park, but it hasn't started yet due to facilities that still need repairs. The Tourism Agency has not brought up this plan, especially since the head of the agency has changed. Unless we remind the new head that we already have this program. PT. Pertamina's CSR has also expired, and they have asked us to be independent, but we haven't been able to do that yet and still need intervention from other parties. We have requested an audience several times, but there has been no response" (individual interview: July 16, 2026).*

From the results of the interview above, the factors that caused tourism integration not to work were not only the lack of implementation of the results of established communication but also changes in leadership and dependence on CSR programs. Changes in leadership can affect agreed-upon plans previously, as these are not automatically carried forward. Meanwhile, the dependencis vulnerableal managers on external support, such as temporary CSR funds, also

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makes the integration program vulnerable to stopping once the CSR period ends, while the capacity of managers to continue the program independently has not yet been fully developed.

Inter-institutional coordination in the development of integrated tourism in Pekanbaru City has only reached the level of horizontal communication but has not yet transformed into substantive coordination as required in the framework of joined-up governance. In this perspective, the effectiveness of coordination between the four tourism destinations should be measured not only by the intensity of interaction between actors, but also by cooperation that results in joint decisions, clearly divides responsibilities, and ensures the sustainability of follow-up that does not depend on a particular actor or temporary funding sources from companies. An Indonesian study of a government-led destination management organization similarly illustrates the importance of participatory leadership and collaborative governance arrangements in coordinating tourism stakeholders (Teguh & Scott, 2026).

4.3.3. Institutional Integration

Institutional integration relates to the existence of formal structures or forums that unite actors in a collaborative work pattern. This third indicator assesses the extent to which a joint institutional structure or forum has been formed that has the authority to coordinate the four tourism areas as a single unit. The findings show that institutional integration is the weakest indicator among the four.

First, the four tourism destinations develop under different legal bases and institutional structures. Pulau Semut is a CSR development area of PT Pertamina Patra Niaga under the auspices of the Pekanbaru City Culture and Tourism Agency. DuRanch was developed entirely through community self-help initiatives on private land without the involvement of Government assets. The artificial lake is managed by a Regionally Owned Enterprise with land ownership status that is still in dispute. Meanwhile, Taman Bunga Okura is managed by Pokdarwis under the administrative status of "tourism village". These differences in ownership status hinder institutional integration. As stated by Assistant II of the Pekanbaru City Government:

> *"There must first be an agreement regarding ownership of the tourism site, for example, whether it's privately owned or government owned. Therefore, a mutually beneficial business scheme is needed" (individual interview: June 23, 2026)*

This statement shows that institutional integration is not sufficient to be achieved by forming a government forum. Private managers, communities, regional-owned enterprises, CSR-providing companies, and managers must also be involved in agreements that regulate benefits, risks, and responsibilities. For multi-actor tourism collaboration, institutional agreements should therefore be evaluated not merely by their existence but by whether they distribute authority and enable inclusive decision-making (Provan & Kenis, 2008).

Second, several supporting institutions are available, but there is no specific institution to manage the integration of tourism areas. Pokdarwis is the main institution at the destination level. Each Pokdarwis focuses on object management, visitor services, promotion, and community empowerment at its location. Through Pokdarwis, the Government provides guidance, certification, outreach, and promotion.

Taman Bunga Okura also has institutional legality. The manager said there were two Decrees (SK) from the city government, namely the Culture and Tourism Agency and the Agriculture and Fisheries Agency. The existence of the Decree provides a legal basis for the management of the Taman Bunga Okura. The managers are also members of a network of tourist villages, tourism communities, and communication groups involving the government. However, the available institutions are still focused on managing their respective destinations. There is no specific institution to manage the integration of Pulau Semut, DuRanch, Danau Buatan, and Taman Bunga Okura.

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This condition shows that weak institutional integration is basically a further consequence of the fragmentation of policy coherence and coordination that has been described in the previous indicator. In the joined-up governance framework, institutional integration occupies a central position because the joint structure or forum functions as a forum that translates normative commitments and communication between actors into directed collective action. The absence of a permanent institution among the four tourism destinations with cross-sectoral authority means there is no binding program, even though the actors know each other and communicate, without the existence of a formal structure that oversees the four tourism destinations, integration efforts will continue to depend on momentary initiatives and personal relationships, rather than on a sustainable institutional system.

4.3.4. Alignment of Goals

Joined-up governance requires alignment of goals at two levels. First, the actors involved must have the same vision. Second, actors must translate the vision into targets, indicators, and joint actions. The research findings indicate that goal alignment has been formed at the normative level. All actors' support tourism development, increasing visits, community empowerment, MSME development, improving safety, and environmental improvement. Data show that PT Pertamina has explicitly formulated formal goals, namely contributing to the SDGs, namely poverty alleviation, decent work, and economic growth through the empowerment of approximately 50 beneficiaries. The City Government formulated similar goals in the form of synergy between one destination and another to increase benefits and visits. Likewise, the Culture and Tourism Agency encourages cross-promotion and development of tourism awareness groups to align with the goals of the Pekanbaru City Government. As stated by the Secretary of the Pekanbaru City Culture and Tourism Agency:

> *"The Pokdarwis are under our supervision, and their development is aligned with the Pekanbaru City Government's goals. We provide certification to promote tourism, and we take Pokdarwis to other regions for comparative studies" (individual interview: June 25, 2026).*

In addition, the Transportation Agency supports smooth access, road safety, the provision of signage, and river transportation. The Regional Disaster Management Agency focuses on safety, evacuation, and disaster preparedness. The Environment and Sanitation Agency focuses on cleanliness, beauty, mangrove protection, parks, and the development of water tourism that takes environmental conditions into account. The Agriculture and Fisheries Agency supports the development of farmer groups, seed and production facility providers, training in cultivation and processing of agricultural products, as well as mentoring agrotourism activities and agricultural education.

At the destination level, destination managers also have an orientation towards community empowerment. Taman Bunga Okura provides space for MSMEs, youth activities, environmental education, camping, and other tourism activities. Managers see tourism as a means of increasing income and creating employment opportunities for the community. DuRanch emphasized empowering local communities, involving neighborhood association heads, developing tourist villages, equestrian activities, agriculture, MSMEs, and utilizing river areas. Pulau Semut also strives to maintain tourism activities and provide space for the community. Despite having a shared vision, the actors have not yet agreed on the final form of the integrated tourism area. It is not yet clear whether the integration will take the form of a river cruise, a multi-destination visit package, a joint calendar of activities, digital promotions, connecting transportation, or the development of a single area with various supporting activities.

These findings show that the alignment of objectives in the development of integrated tourism in Pekanbaru City has only been achieved at the conceptual level but has not yet reached the strategic-operational level as required in the joined-up governance framework. The shared

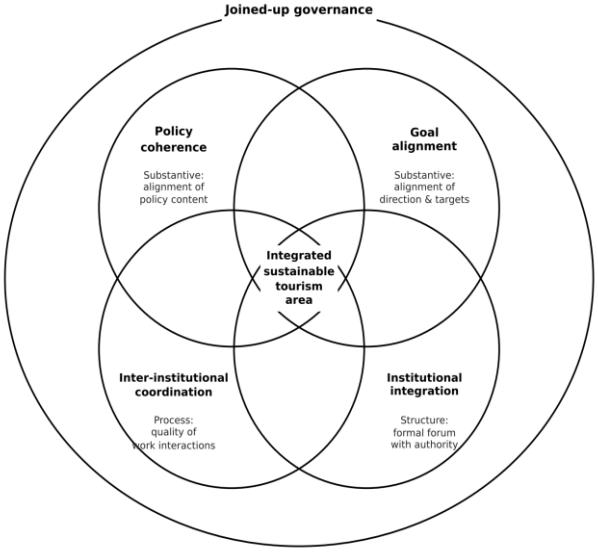
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orientation between actors towards increasing visits, empowering the community economy, and preserving the environment shows that the normative foundation for collaboration already exists. However, this alignment was not followed by a joint agreement regarding quantitative targets, success indicators, implementation priorities, or a concrete division of roles between agencies and destination managers.

5. Discussion

The empirical findings in this study are linked to four indicators: policy coherence, inter-agency coordination, institutional integration, and goal alignment, which are used to assess the extent to which inter-regional and inter-actor relations have formed integrated governance. In terms of policy coherence indicators, the conditions found are still low. Policy coherence has been established at the planning document level (RIPPARDA 2021–2036), but has not yet been translated into technical regulations and binding formal decisions. Tourism, transportation, safety, environment, development, infrastructure, and CSR programs have not been connected in one cross-sector policy. This condition is indicated by the absence of a Decree, Standard Operating Procedures, and a joint action plan that specifically forms the basis for implementing tourism area integration. In the inter-institutional coordination indicator, the relationship between actors has actually been formed, but is still at the communication level. Interactions are carried out through FGDs, WhatsApp groups, tourism awareness groups, tourism village networks, and direct communication. These various channels indicate that communication between actors has taken place, but has not yet developed into coordination that results in consistent and sustainable joint action. In terms of institutional integration indicators, the conditions found are still weak. The existence of tourism awareness groups and tourism village networks shows that institutional elements at the local level are available. However, there is no formal forum that has the authority to manage the integration of the four tourism areas. The FGDs that were conducted were still temporary and were not equipped with a clear follow-up mechanism. Meanwhile, in terms of goal alignment, the actors share a common vision. All parties support tourism development and improving the community's economy. However, this shared vision has not been translated into shared targets, shared success indicators, shared program priorities, or benefit schemes agreed upon by all actors. Thus, the framework shows that although there are relationships, communication, local institutions, and a common vision among the actors, these elements have not been connected into a complete governance system.

Figure 1: The Scheme of Sustainable Tourism Integration Area based on the Joined-up Governance



Source: *Processed by the researcher (2026).*

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This research offers an integration of sustainable tourism based on joined-up governance as outlined by Pollitt (2003). These components are integrated to support the management of Pulau Semut, DuRanch, Danau Buatan and Taman Bunga Okura as one river-based tourism area. This outline aims to gain economic benefits for MSMEs and local communities, river safety and environmental protection, and community participation, which lead to the sustainability of the economy, the environment and the community. The recommendations below are the researcher's

proposals, derived from the findings of the four indicators. Tourists are directed to enjoy the Siak River panorama and Malay village atmosphere (Pulau Semut), agrotourism and horse riding (DuRanch), water tourism (Danau Buatan), and the flower garden, camping and agricultural education (Taman Bunga Okura). It is integrated into a river cruise package using traditional boats that connect the four areas, as conceptualized in the 2024 FGD. Because the readiness of the four areas is not at the same level, the integration can be implemented in stages. Pulau Semut and Taman Bunga Okura, which are active and already connected by traditional boat, form the first route. DuRanch joins once its facilities are repaired and its operations resume, and Danau Buatan joins after a unified management system, and the land ownership issue are settled.

Regarding policy coherence, the City Government needs to translate RIPPARDA 2021–2036 into binding instruments, namely a Mayoral Decree on the integration of the four tourism areas, a river-cruise safety SOP, operational permits for river tourism transport, and cooperation agreements between the areas. Regarding inter-institutional coordination, each agency should be given a clear role in a joint work programme. The Culture and Tourism Agency is responsible for destination development, tourism products and service standards. The Transportation Agency prepares the ports at Tuan Kadi and Sungai Duku, the water bus and the boats. BPBD handles safety and disaster mitigation, the Environment Agency monitors the tourism environment, and the Agriculture and Fisheries Agency supports agrotourism and farmer groups. The existing channels, namely WhatsApp groups, Pokdarwis and the Jadesta network, can be used for operational communication, while decisions and follow-up actions are recorded. Regarding institutional integration, a permanent integration forum should be established through the Decree, coordinated by the City Government through the Culture and Tourism Agency. The forum involves the technical agencies, the four destination managers and Pokdarwis, community and business actors, the regionally owned enterprise, and private partners such as PT Pertamina Patra Niaga. The forum also prepares a mutually beneficial business scheme that regulates benefits, risks and responsibilities among actors with different legal bases. Decisions of the forum are recorded in formal documents so that they remain valid when agency leadership changes. The forum also prepares the managers to continue independently once CSR support ends, for example through revenue from the river cruise package and the joint event.

Regarding goal alignment, the forum needs to decide the final form of integration. This study recommends the river cruise as the main product, supported by a joint calendar of events and joint digital promotion. The shared vision is then translated into quantitative targets, such as the number of visits to each area, the number of MSMEs and workers involved, and the benefits received by the community, with the approximately 50 beneficiaries projected in the CSR programme as a starting reference.

By integrating these four indicators, the integration of tourism areas is not only the development of a tourism product but also a governance development process. The forum is the place where the Decree, SOP, work programme, agreements and targets are held together, and it is the centre of the overlap in Scheme 1. The researcher believes that the integration of the four river-based areas will be directed by the binding policies, active coordination, standing institutions and shared targets described above. Thus, the river-based tourism of Pekanbaru City can be developed as an integrated and sustainable tourism area, and the economic, social and environmental benefits can be enjoyed.

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6. Conclusions

Pekanbaru City has great potential to develop its river-based tourism areas into one integrated, sustainable tourism area. Tourist visits have continued to increase, from 923,162 in 2021 to 2,374,534 in 2025. Naturally, the Siak River connects four tourism areas in East Rumbai: Pulau Semut, DuRanch, Danau Buatan and Taman Bunga Okura. Each has a different attraction, but they are still managed separately and are not yet at the same level of readiness. The actors already have a basis for integration, namely the RIPPARDA 2021–2036, a shared vision, active communication, and destination-level institutions such as Pokdarwis. However, the integration has not yet run optimally. Policy coherence has only reached the planning document level, coordination remains at the communication level, institutional integration is the weakest because no forum has authority over the four areas, and goal alignment has not been translated into shared targets. Leadership turnover, dependence on CSR funding and differences in ownership status make the integration more vulnerable. The development of these areas can be achieved by integrating the four joined-up governance indicators: binding policy instruments, joint work programmes with clear roles, a permanent integration forum, and shared targets and success indicators. This integration pattern can bring economic benefits, protect the river environment and safety, and strengthen community participation simultaneously.

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9. Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

10. Declaration of the use of AI

During the preparation of this work, the authors used Grammarly, and Claude in order to improve language and readability. Mendeley was used to manage and organize the literature sources used in the references. After using these tools, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and took full responsibility for the content of the published article.

11. Authors' Contribution

Fatmawati: Conceptualization, methodology, investigation, formal analysis, project administration, supervision, writing – original draft, writing – review & editing. **Muhammad Afdal:** Investigation, formal analysis, project administration, writing – original draft. **M. Zacky**

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Faluti: Investigation, data curation, formal analysis, validation, writing – original draft, writing – review & editing. **Roza Andriani:** Investigation, formal analysis, writing – review & editing.

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