CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the tourism industry has emerged as a major driver of worldwide economic development (Maiti, 2023). Prior studies have revealed that tourism-related services, including hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, and entertainment, make substantial contributions to the economy (Soemitro Remi et al., 2017). The growing demand from tourists to explore diverse destinations has given rise to several significant types of tourism, such as recreational tourism, health care tourism, and cultural tourism. Due to the increasing demand from tourists visiting various destinations, several types of tourism have emerged as significant attractions, including recreational tourism, health care tourism, and cultural tourism (Ana Maria student, 2016). The tourism sector also supports economic growth in the Southeast Asia region. A research study on the connection between tourism and economic growth in 11 Southeast Asian countries revealed that factors like domestic travel, tourism spending, and investment in the tourism sector contribute positively to boosting Gross Domestic Product (Yunitaningtyas et al., 2019). From the 11 Southeast Asian countries, there are strong reasons why tourists choose to visit Indonesia and Thailand compared to other ASEAN countries. For example, several main factors in Thailand attract tourists, including exciting attractions, rich culture and heritage, and unique culinary delights. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, the supporting factors that make tourists visit include the archipelago's splendor, cultural diversity, adventure, and ecotourism.

In today's technological era, tourism development focuses not only on destination development and promotion but also on the crucial role of digital reviews in guiding tourists and predicting their future preferences (Pantano et al., 2017). The rise of online tools like travel search engines and booking platforms has made organizing and managing trips easier for travelers. This shift marks a move from the traditional reliance on travel agents to an increasing preference among tourists for planning their trips. An important factor driving this change is the availability of TripAdvisor, which enables tourists to share and access information about the places they visit, helping future travelers make informed decisions. This trend towards digitalization and personalized travel arrangements has reduced the reliance on traditional travel agents (Polukhina et al., 2020). Additionally, TripAdvisor allows tourists to find destinations that match their preferences and behaviors by reading reviews from other travelers.

Understanding tourist preferences and behaviors is crucial for enhancing the experience in a travel destination. Tourism has undergone a significant transformation in how destination reviews are provided. Initially, recommendations were predominantly shared through word of mouth; however, there has been a shift towards textual reviews in recent years. This change necessitates adopting advanced analytical methods to process and analyze this data effectively. Text mining, leveraging Natural Language Processing (NLP), is posited as a superior approach to traditional statistical methods, which are increasingly perceived as inadequate for handling the complexity and nuances of textual data. Therefore, exploring NLP techniques to enhance the accuracy and depth of insights derived from tourist reviews is imperative. Researchers have explored various methods for evaluating tourist experiences. Among these methods, text mining has emerged as a particularly valuable approach. Text mining provides deep insights into tourists' viewpoints and experiences (Li et al., 2019). Highlighting the aspects of a tourist's experience and identifying areas that need enhancement is instrumental in shaping a comprehensive understanding of the tourist experience. It reflects the importance of adapting to digital advances in evaluating and enhancing travel experiences. Another research mentioned emphasizes the significance of online reviews in influencing tourist behavior and decision-making for a heritage site in China (Xu et al., 2021). Previous studies found that positive reviews, specific content, and familiarity with a destination increased the intention to visit, highlighting the important role of online reviews in shaping a destination's attractiveness. The data used is 1,055 TripAdvisor user's resident in Spain (Bigne et al., 2019). Other studies discuss exploring the sentiment classification of online travel review texts to improve the accuracy of sentiment analysis using the SVM method. This approach improved the sentiment classification accuracy of online travel review texts (Chen et al., 2020).

The author identified an opportunity to research online reviews based on limitations observed in previous studies, which use limited scope and classical classifiers as the methodology. This study explores TripAdvisor reviews to understand travelers' viewpoints on Indonesia and Thailand destinations. This platform allows tourists to share their experiences and opinions about their destinations. The importance of travel reviewers is highlighted particularly in their influence on tourists' decisions. We propose a model for assessing tourist experiences that utilizes online reviews from TripAdvisor to analyze sentiment and experiences within Southeast Asian countries in the digital age. Our research seeks to employ NLP techniques to evaluate tourist experiences across 25 famous destinations in Indonesia and Thailand, using sentiment analysis and multiclass text classification derived from TripAdvisor reviews.

The basis of our research is to expand the analysis previously conducted using surveys. We aim to utilize a deep learning approach to analyze tourist reviews, allowing for a broader range of samples and destinations. Apart from that, we will provide a structured exploration of the tourism experience in several key sections. The introduction will provide an overview of changes in collecting and analyzing tourist feedback, setting the stage for deeper examination. The literature review will contextualize our research, showing how our approach aligns with or deviates from previous methodologies. The methodology section details the analysis techniques used to assess tourist reviews, focusing on sentiment analysis and entertainment factors influencing satisfaction in Indonesia and Thailand. Finally, the results and discussion section will present our findings, interpret their implications for tourism development, and conclude with recommendations for improving the tourism sector.