

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, many studies have highlighted the significant role of the tourism sector in driving a country's economic development, contributing to long-term economic growth (Rasool et al., 2021), creating employment opportunities, and gross domestic product development (Raja & Venkateswaran, 2022). The tourism sector significantly contributes to generating income and creating jobs in Southeast Asia (Trupp et al., 2020). Numerous case studies in the region indicate a marked increase in international tourist arrivals, growing from 21.2 million in 1990 to 129 million in 2018 (Walker, 2023). Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam are three countries in the region that consistently draw large numbers of foreign visitors each year. Indonesia made a major contribution to regional tourism through its significant revenue, which amounted to approximately 548 million US dollars in 2021 (World Data, 2021). Thailand, with over 28 million foreign tourists in 2023 (Chung et al., 2015) continues to affirm its position as a key player in the global tourism market. Vietnam's notable increase of 5.5 million foreign visitors in just the first six months of 2023 (Walker, 2023) indicates its rising prominence as a tourist destination. The substantial growth and notable contributions of the tourism sector in Southeast Asia, especially in Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam, highlight its crucial importance in promoting economic development, creating job opportunities, and boosting regional prosperity.

The increased use of technology has made information about tourism destinations more accessible to travelers. Tourists often share their impressions and experiences or seek more specific information about the destination (Chung et al., 2015). This behavior led to a shift in how tourists independently arrange their travel plans based on personal preferences rather than relying on travel agents. Visitor reviews become essential since they help tourists to find destinations that align with their desires and personal preferences. Modern tourists have developed a habit of staying constantly connected to the internet, sharing information about their visits through blogs,

forums, online communities, and social networks dedicated to travel (Zhang et al., n.d.).

One of the leading global travel platforms that facilitate the exchange of personal reviews, ratings, and opinions is Tripadvisor. This platform plays a crucial role for tourists to exchange information, serving as a reference space for understanding the attractions of a tourist destination. Its extensive reach and user engagement make it an invaluable tool for both travelers and tourism stakeholders alike, shaping the landscape of the global tourism industry.

The shift in tourist behavior generates a complex tourist movement pattern (Trupp et al., 2020). Understanding tourist mobility might be challenging for the tourism industry to meet tourist dynamics. By conducting an in-depth analysis of tourist movement patterns, tourism stakeholders can be assisted in tourism strategy management, including tourism route and activity planning, tourism products, tourism attraction planning, and accommodation development (Arreeras et al., 2019). Previous research has identified the varying preferences among tourists from different origins (Xu, Li, et al., 2021), as well as on weekdays and weekends (Alamsyah et al., 2018). Another study used network analysis combined with text classifications found tourists' perspectives among different cognitive dimensions such as natural attractions and infrastructure (Ramadhani et al., 2024). This information might become a valuable insight to provide promotion pattern opportunities (Tripadvisor, 2015).

Tripadvisor has highlighted that managing online reputation is a significant investment area since tourists are inclined to spend more time in reputable destinations (Tripadvisor, 2015). Advanced approaches are employed to track tourist mobility, utilizing big data from transactions, device data, and user-generated content (UGC) (Li et al., 2018). Some studies utilize network science approaches to characterize tourist mobility patterns and interactions (Stienmetz & Fesenmaier, 2019; Xu, Li, et al., 2021). Network analysis is useful to characterize tourist mobility patterns and interactions through various metrics such as in and out degree, network density, and community structure (Xu, Li, et al., 2021). In several studies,

association rule mining is also employed to explore tourist preferences by identifying travel patterns between destinations. Some studies combined the two approaches to gain a more comprehensive understanding of tourist behaviors and preferences.

Previous studies have utilized network analysis to investigate tourist movement patterns within specific regions, such as Bali, using traveler reviews over a short period (Tripadvisor, 2015). However, this approach has significantly limited comprehension of broader and long-term trends. There are only limited studies that explore the intricacies of tourist mobility patterns over extended periods and across multiple countries in the region, specifically in Southeast Asia. This study aims to bridge these research gaps by conducting a comparative analysis of tourist mobility in Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam. Encompassing a two-decade period from 2004 to 2023, this research employed a comprehensive dataset consisting of 527,960 traveler reviews to provide a more holistic understanding of tourist movement dynamics within the region.

This study provides valuable insights into the long-term patterns of tourist movement and destination preferences across multiple geographic locations in Southeast Asia. By conducting a comparative analysis of tourist mobility in Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam over a two-decade period, this research presents a unique opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics shaping tourism mobility in the region. Comparative analyses between countries offer valuable insights into each destination's unique characteristics and competitive advantages, thereby informing strategic planning and decision-making within the tourism industry. The findings of this study contribute to bridging the existing research gaps and provide a foundation for future investigations into the complexities of tourist mobility patterns in Southeast Asia and beyond.