

# Forest Conservative Lifestyle Of Mentawai Shaman

*by* Myrza Rahmanita

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# Forest Conservative Lifestyle of Mentawai Shaman (Sikerei): Indigenous Enrichment to the Education Value of Ecotourism in South Siberut, Mentawai, West Sumatra, Indonesia

*Myrza Rahmanita<sup>1</sup>, Fetty Asmaniati<sup>2</sup>, Nurbaeti<sup>3</sup>,  
Triana Rosalina Dewi<sup>4</sup>, Nurima Rahmitasari<sup>5</sup>  
Trisakti School of Tourism, Indonesia<sup>1, 2,3,4,5</sup>  
Guangzhou University, China<sup>5</sup>*

## Abstract

Indonesia is ranked number four in the world, in terms of its abundant wealth of biodiversity. Mentawai Island Regency, (Mentawai for short), located in West Sumatra Indonesia is known for its Biosphere Reserve of the Siberut National Park. It and the area surrounding the National Park are being challenged by the increased degradation of natural resources and low environmental management and control. Ecotourism is considered as an alternative solution to answer the environmental problems of forest conservation in Siberut. Ecotourism education as a means of achieving forest conservation goals needs to rely on local values to be effective. Ecotourism education and learning, especially regarding forest conservation in villages around the Siberut National Park can be obtained from a traditional figure known as Sikerei, the Mentawai shaman. The indigenous Mentawai cherish and respect their Sikerei as traditional leader and healer. Research was conducted on the Mentawai Shamanic (Sikerei) Forest Conservative Lifestyle: Indigenous Enrichment of the Value of Ecotourism Education in South Siberut, Mentawai, West Sumatra, Indonesia. The aims of this study are (1) to explore the most dominant lifestyle type of Mentawai Sikerei in relation to forest conservation; and (2) to determine the indigenous forest conservative lifestyle of Sikerei that can be translated into and to enrich the education value of ecotourism in Mentawai. The objective is to incorporate Ecotourism Education Values that are in line with the Indigenous Local Wisdom of Mentawai in South Siberut, Mentawai, and West Sumatra, Indonesia. This descriptive study was conducted during the period of August 2019 to February 2020. Using the Schwartz Value Survey instrument, eight out of the total of twenty-one Sikerei from the Matotonan village of South Siberut Mentawai were chosen to fill self-assessment questionnaire, followed by an interview. The descriptive data analysis revealed that most Sikerei in Matotonan has a dominant conservation lifestyle. Their indigenous forest conservative lifestyle can be interpreted and translated to deepen the education value of ecotourism in Mentawai.

**Keywords:** *forest conservation, lifestyle type, and education value, indigenous, ecotourism*

## A. Introduction

Indonesia is a tropical country, located between the two continents of Asia and Australia and between the two oceans of Pacific and Indian Ocean. The equator crosses the country. The country's abundant biodiversity and endemism is ranked number three in the world, after Brazil and Colombia (Nurbaya, 2020).

Mentawai, (short term for Mentawai Island Regency), located in West Sumatra, Indonesia, is famous for its biosphere reserves, namely the Siberut National Park. The Minister of Forestry Decree No. 407/Kpts-II/1993, as The Siberut National Park, has designated the conservation area of Siberut Island. The area (190,500 ha) comprises the natural reserves (132,900 ha), protected forest (3,500 ha), limited production forest (36,600 ha) and permanent production forest (36,600 ha). (Sagajinpoula, 2015). The still natural condition of the forest in this national park contains many large trees with an average height of 60 meters. The flora and fauna found in the Siberut National Park area are diverse. (Sagajinpoula, 2015).

Utilisation of forests by the indigenous people of Siberut, the Mentawai tribe, is very limited except for certain production interests (Persoon, 2001 in Indra, Nurainas, Chairul & Mansyurdin, 2017). The forest of Siberut National Park is the source of the needs of daily life for the people of Mentawai. It provides their medicine, food and house building materials. Such indigenous communities have clear incentives to conserve and manage their forest resources sustainably (Tee, Agbidye, & Ogwuche, (2014).

The culture of the indigenous tribe, Mentawai, reflects a unique relationship with nature. They consider it to be very important for the community to maintain harmony among the various elements of the forests as sustained significant economic sources of their food and income. Harmony is maintained through ceremonies (lia, punen). Imposing restrictions on individual behaviour, and taboo systems (prohibitions) govern activities involving hunting, fishing, collecting forest products, and raising (Persoon 2002).

Mentawai island communities face increased environmental problems arising from the degradation of natural resources. The implementation of Government Regulation (Perda) No. 6/2017 suffers from low environmental management and control and non-optimal management of protected areas. Mentawai langurs are endangered because their population continues to decline, estimated to have reached a fifty (50%) percent decline over the last forty (40) years due to habitat destruction and hunting activities. (IUCN Redlist, 2016 in STPT-TFCA, 2019). Febrianti (2019) reported that there has been a reduction in forest coverage for industrial monoculture plantations.

Ecotourism is considered an alternative solution to the forest conservation problems in Siberut. The Local Regulations (Perda) No. 6/2017 about the Mentawai Island Regency's Long Term Regional Development Plan, Siberut National Park and its surrounding villages have been designated as ecotourism areas by the Local Government of Mentawai Island Regency. Included as the ecotourism area are the villages of Sigapokna, Simalegi and Simatalu (West Siberut), Bojakan (North Siberut), Sibudda Oinan (Central Siberut), Matotonan and Madobag (South Siberut), Katurei and Sagulubbek (Southwest Siberut). This study conducted in Matotonan village. focusses on investigations on the forest conservation practices within the conservation area as in Perda No. 6/2017, which can be used to develop a much-needed ecotourism learning and education programme.

Bisong and Essien (2010) noted that the protected areas' conservation and development almost always encounter difficulties because of a lack of foundational knowledge and the ability to manage indigenous resources in relation to the ecosystem functions. Indigenous communities depend heavily on forest resources for their living, and therefore have clear incentives to manage forests sustainably (Tee, Agbidye, & Ogwuche, 2014). An ecotourism education and learning programme, especially regarding forest conservation in the villages of and around the Siberut National Park, can be developed, by learning from the expertise and experience of the traditional leader, the Mentawai shaman, known as Sikerei.

Sikerei as a Mentawai shaman is considered an important traditional leader who maintains the traditions and customs of the indigenous Mentawai. Sikerei. They are cherished as healers in the indigenous medical system. They perform indigenous rituals, namely birth, puberty, marriage, and death rituals. Sikerei are referred to as the Guardians of the Mentawai Forest ([mentawaikita.com](http://mentawaikita.com))

In the indigenous communities, Sikerei is therefore considered a central figure, representing the traditional values of Mentawai tribe, and reflecting the power to connect with the supernatural. The indigenous people of Mentawai respect them highly. Sikerei are appreciated as people with adulthood, maturity, and wisdom in carrying out indigenous traditions and customs. The Mentawai Sikerei believes that conserving the existence of the forest is necessary to sustain the balance of life. (West Sumatra antaranews.com, 21 September 2019).

Ecology education and learning relates to creating awareness and understanding about forest conservation. The Sikerei can teach the Mentawai communities much about forest conservation values, especially the respect for the tradition of indigenous Mentawai.

Values are standards or principles that are considered valuable or important in life. They guide acceptable patterns of behaviour (Kunchithapadam, 2005). Values determine lifestyle patterns (Gunter & Furnham, 2015). The forest conservation values of the Sikerei are manifested in the Sikerei lifestyle. This Sikerei forest conservation related values have not been fully explored as educational and learning values in ecotourism. This research was therefore carried out to learn the “Forest Conservation Lifestyle of Mentawai Shaman (Sikerei): An Indigenous Enrichment to the Education Value of Ecotourism in South Siberut, Mentawai, West Sumatra, Indonesia”

The purpose of this study is (1) To analyse the most dominant lifestyle type of Mentawai Sikerei in relation to forest conservation; and (2) To discover the indigenous forest conservative lifestyle of Sikerei as to enrich the education value of ecotourism in Mentawai. The research findings will help us develop Ecotourism Education Values that are in line with the Indigenous Local Wisdom of Mentawai in South Siberut, Mentawai, and West Sumatra, Indonesia.

## B. Literature Review

Ecotourism. The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defines Ecotourism as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserve the environment, sustains the wellbeing of the local people, and involves interpretation and education.” (The International Ecotourism Society, 2015). Fennell, (2014) explains that the essence or core criteria of ecotourism are (1) The foundation of nature-based ecotourism; (2) The dimensions of ecotourism sustainability from a conservation perspective;

(3) Sustainability of the human dimension in the form of local participation and benefits; (4) Learning and education as part of the ecotourism experience; and (5) Ethical imperatives.

Forest. Xu, Ma, Tashi, Fu, Lu, and Melick. (2005) explain that the forest supports a variety of cultural services, which include spiritual services, inspiration, aesthetic values, and recreation places. Therefore, the sustainability of indigenous ecotourism is very dependent on the protection of the forests around their homes.

Education. Education is a process whereby knowledge is passed from one person (a teacher or guide) to another (student or tourist). Knowledge is gained from outside sources. (Fennell, 2014) Education is a social process of learning with and from other humans. (Falk & Staus, 2013).

Education Value. Education value is the education concerned in <sup>12</sup> the development of the total personality of the individual's intellectual, social, emotional, aesthetic, moral and spiritual aspect. It involves developing sensitivity of the good, the right, and the beautiful; the ability to choose the right values in alignment with thought and action. (Seshadri, 2005).

Education in Ecotourism. <sup>2</sup> The educational aspects of ecotourism provide opportunities for acquiring new knowledge, developing a greater awareness of and appreciation for nature and wildlife, reflecting on deep and important issues, reconsidering attitudes, values and beliefs, making changes to everyday actions and thus facilitating the adoption of a sustainable lifestyle. (Ballantyne, & Packer, 2013). Such transformative experiences can be deeply satisfying, leading to increased self-efficacy and self-esteem. Self-development may also occur through meeting physical and intellectual challenges and developing new skills.

<sup>1</sup> Educational and interpretive activities are necessary to establish the intellectual and emotional connections between people and the places they visit in order to provide meaning about the things they see and do. Thus, the challenge for ecotourism operators will be to develop experiences that promote these connections so that they can effectively enhance both the educational and conservative outcomes that make ecotourism experiences socially and politically important as well as increase visitor satisfaction outcomes. They are fundamental to the economic success of such enterprises. (Weiler and Ham, 2001).

Education and Learning Values of Ecotourism. According to Packer & Ballantyne (2013) the main focus of education in ecotourism is related to tourist learning experiences aimed at environmental conservation. Ecotourism is distinguished from nature-based tourism, which is travel for the purpose of enjoying undeveloped natural areas or wildlife. Ecotourism is responsible travel to natural areas, which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people. (Rodger, Moore, Newsome, 2007).

Conservation. According to United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2016), sustainable tourism is tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities. Thus a key element in tourism development is to maintain important ecological processes and help conserve natural resources and biodiversity. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN, 2010) states that indigenous knowledge-based conservation systems are complementary knowledge in the conservation of sustainable development, including tourism because many indigenous people living in forest areas are known to have traditional relationships with their lands and are users and managers of these forest land resources.

Lifestyle. Lifestyle is a pattern of social behaviour characteristics of both individuals and groups (Veal, 2000). Lifestyle typology can be based on various types of variables, such as opinion activities, values, preferences, and personality characteristics (Jansen, 2011).

Value. Value study is one approach in studying lifestyle. Values are desirable, trans-situational goals of varying importance, that serve as guiding principles in people's lives (Vyncke, 2002). Values determine lifestyle patterns. (Gunter & Furnham, 2015). Values are used to characterise cultural groups, societies, and individuals, to trace change over time, and to explain the motivational bases of attitudes and behaviour. (Schwartz, 2012)

Lifestyle and Value. Schwartz (2006) states values are beliefs tied to emotion, not objective, cold ideas. They are motivational constructs and refer to desirable goals people strive to attain. Schwartz (2012) developed a basic human value theory consisting of ten types of universal values and motivation. The ten types of Universal Value Domains are (1) Self-Direction; (2) Stimulation; (3) Hedonism;

(4) Achievement; (5) Power; (6) Security; (7) Conformity; (8) Tradition; (9) Benevolence; and (10) Universalism. Based on the ten value domains, Schwartz developed four types of lifestyle, namely openness to change, self-enhancement, conservation, and self-transcendence.

### **C. Research Methodology**

This study uses both descriptive and quantitative research approaches. Secondary data were obtained from related readings and e-journals. Primary data were gained through direct observation, research instruments of Schwartz Value Survey distribution and collection.

Interviews were carried out with eight (8) Sikerei chosen as sample respondents, to represent the population of around 21 in the village of Matotonan, South Siberut, Mentawai. Each research instrument item has a gradual variation from very positive to very negative: 7 (very important); 6 (important); 5, 4 (without label); 3 (sufficient); 2 (without label); 1 (less important); 0 (not important); -1 (opposite to the value adopted by the respondent). Questionnaires collected were then processed and analysed using a descriptive analysis method. This study was conducted during the period of August 2019 until February 2020.

### **D. Results**

#### **Demographic Profile**

Respondents within this study are Sikerei from Matotonan Village, South Siberut, Mentawai. All eight respondents are male, seven of them are married. Their ages range from 52 to 75 years old. They have been Sikerei for between 21 years and 52 years.

#### **Result 1. Sikerei Dominant Lifestyle Type**

The dominant forest conservative lifestyle type of Matotonan Sikerei respondents is Conservative. Six out of eight respondents (75%) show a great tendency for conservative lifestyle type; two respondents (25%) show a mixture of three-lifestyle type of openness to change, self-enhancement, and conservation. Within this study, the dominant conservative lifestyle is discussed further.



**Table 4.1. Forest Conservative Lifestyle Type**

No	Lifestyle Type	Numbers of Sikerei	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
No	Conservative	6	75	75
No	Openness to Change, Self Enhancement & Conservation	2	25	100
<b>Total</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>100</b>	

**Result 2. Sikerei Forest Conservative Education Values**

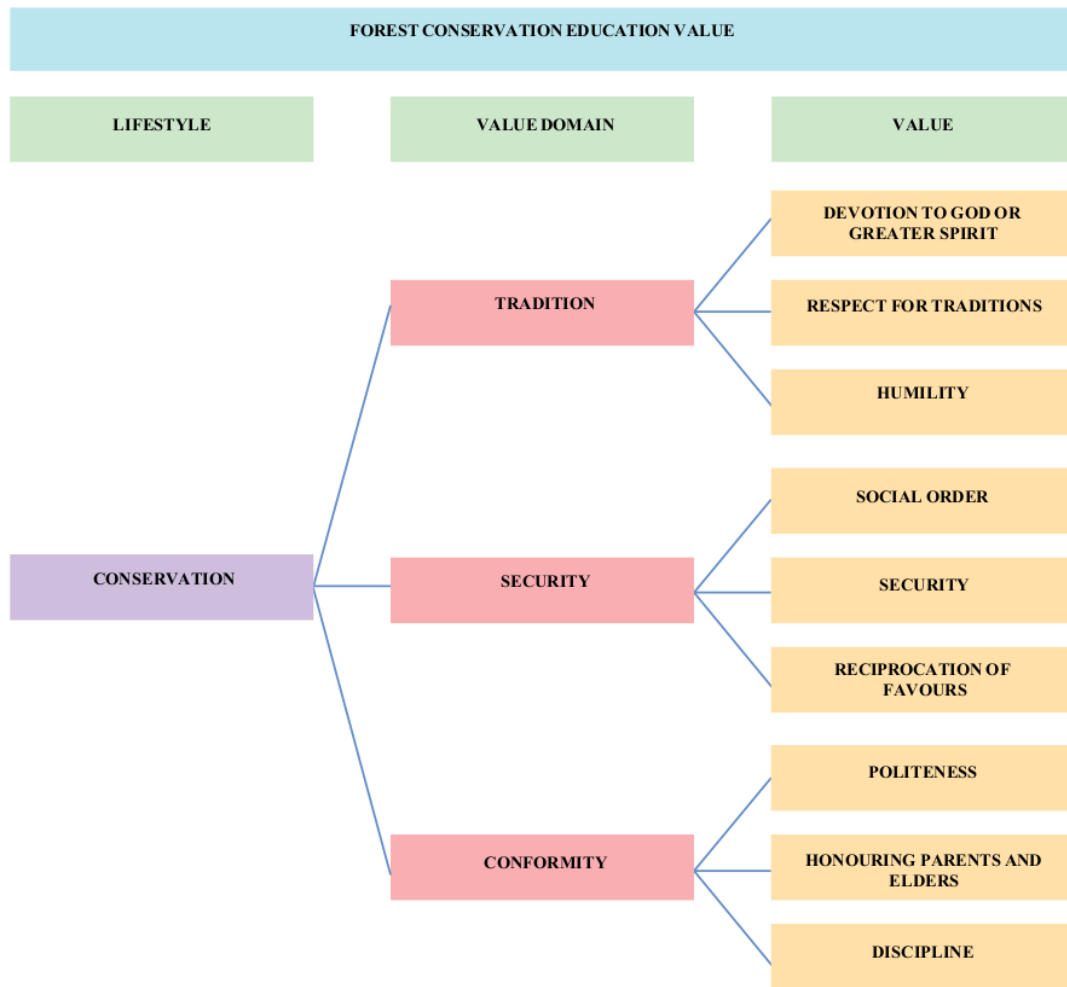
Figure 1. Educational Values of Conservative Lifestyle Type shows that three value domains were addressed by Sikerei, namely Tradition, Security, and Conformity. There are three values contained within the Tradition value domain, that is devotion to God or Greater spirit, respect for tradition, and humility values. The Security value domain consists of social order, security, and reciprocation of favours. Lastly, within the value domain of Conformity, three values are contained - politeness, honouring parents and elders, as well as discipline.

**E. Discussion**

**Sikerei Indigenous Forest Conservative Lifestyle Type to enrich the Education Value of Ecotourism in Mentawai**

**The Value Domain of Tradition in Sikerei Conservative Lifestyle.**

The conservative lifestyle of Sikerei in the tradition value domain emphasises the importance of the preservation of the past and resistance to change. These include acceptance to the customs and ideas given by one’s culture or religion, placing devotion to God, respect, and humility. Adherence to traditional or religious teachings, accepting tradition as part of life and a humble attitude in preserving the ecological process of the forest makes for the sustainability of ecotourism. Tradition requires subordination to more abstract objects – religious and cultural customs and ideas. Traditional values demand a response to the eternal expectations of the past (Swartz, 2012)



**Figure 1. Educational Values of Conservative Lifestyle Type**

Implementation of the value of the Tradition domain in ecotourism education in this study includes (1) the value of obedience to the teachings of tradition or religion; (2) the value of accepting tradition as part of life; and (3) the value of being humble.

Two out of six people of the conservative lifestyle type consider the value of obedience to traditional or religious teachings very important <sup>5</sup> in maintaining forest ecological processes to ensure the sustainability of ecotourism; one answered important and three people, quite important. Three out of the six consider it very important to accept tradition as part of their life in maintaining the ecological process of the forest to ensure the sustainability of ecotourism; two think it is important and one person, quite important. Two out of the six consider the value of being humble very important in maintaining the

ecological process of the forest to ensure the sustainability of ecotourism. Two other people consider it important and one person, quite important.

#### **The Value Domain of Security in Sikerei Conservative Lifestyle.**

The value of security emphasises the orderliness that tends to resist changes outside of the existing order. According to Schwartz (2012) the security, harmony and stability of society are the goals of every action. In the domain of security values, Sikerei serve the interests of others rather than their own, prioritise the interests of a wider group, help one another in security, a sense of belonging, maintaining the social order in harmony as to preserving forest ecological processes to ensure the sustainability of ecotourism. This value domain has the aim of security, harmony and stability of society, relationships and self. The value of security comes from the basic requirements of individuals and groups. Some security values primarily serve individual interests (e.g., hygiene), others broader group interests (e.g., national security). These values are social order, family security, national security, cleanliness, reciprocation), health, mutual help, a sense of belonging (Swartz, 2012). This study focused on the implementation of the value of ecotourism education in (1). the value of security to serve the interests of the individual or community; (2) the value of social harmony; and (3) help each other for safety.

Three out of six people who have the conservative lifestyle type consider it very important for the value of security to serve the interests of individuals or communities in maintaining forest ecological processes to ensure the sustainability of ecotourism; three other people consider it important. Three out of six people consider the value of harmony in social order very important in maintaining the ecological process of forests to ensure the sustainability of ecotourism; three other people considered it important.

Five out of six people consider the value of helping each other very important for the sake of security in maintaining the ecological process of the forest to ensure the sustainability of ecotourism; one other person thinks it is important.

#### **The Value Domain of Conformity in Sikerei Conservative Lifestyle.**

The value domain of conformity emphasises self-delimitation in order to refrain from actions and tendencies to harm others or to anger or violate social norms. Most Sikerei consider values in the conformity domain as important and very important, such as maintaining compliance with rules, self-

5 discipline, courtesy, respect for older people and elderly, being loyal to responsibility, politeness in maintaining forest ecological processes to ensure the sustainability of ecotourism. This domain of conformity value emphasises the value of refraining from actions, tendencies, and compulsions that are likely to anger or harm others and violate social expectations or norms. The value domain of conformity stems from the requirement that individuals inhibit tendencies that can disrupt and undermine smooth interactions and group functioning. Conformity values emphasise self-control in daily interactions, usually with other close people such as obedience, self-discipline, politeness, respect for parents and parents, loyalty, responsibility (Swartz, 2012). The values of ecotourism education in this study are (1). The value of politeness; (2) the value of respecting parents and elderly people; and (3) discipline and obedience to social norms.

As many as four out of the six people consider the value of politeness very important in maintaining forest ecological processes to ensure the sustainability of ecotourism; two other people thought it important. Three out of the six people consider the value of respecting their parents and elderly people very important in maintaining the ecological process of the forest to ensure the sustainability of ecotourism; three other people considered it important. Three out of the six people who have the conservative lifestyle type consider the value of discipline and obedience to social norms very important in maintaining the ecological process of the forest to ensure the sustainability of ecotourism. Three other people considered it important.

## F. Conclusion

The most dominant type of Sikerei forest conservative lifestyle is Conservative – seventy-five (75%) percent. Another twenty-five (25%) per cent of Sikerei have a mixed lifestyle of conservative; openness to change; and self-enhancement.

The lifestyle of Conservative has the value domains of tradition, security, and conformity. The value domain of tradition comes with the values of devotion to God or Greater spirit, respect for tradition, and humility. The value domain of security comes with the values of security, social order and reciprocation of favours. The value domain of conformity comes with the values of politeness, honouring parents and elders, as well as discipline. All these nine values contained in the three value domains stemmed Forest Conservative lifestyle. The Sikerei indigenous conservative lifestyle can be a sustainable and useful foundation for enriching the education value of ecotourism in Mentawai.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

### **Fetty Asmaniati**

Fetty Asmaniati is Associate Professor and President of Trisakti School of Tourism. She is an Assessor of National Accreditation Board for Higher Education of Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia. She can be contacted at [fettyasmaniati@stptrisakti.ac.id](mailto:fettyasmaniati@stptrisakti.ac.id)/ [fetty\\_a@yahoo.com](mailto:fetty_a@yahoo.com).

### **Benyapa Sanggern**

Benyapa Sanggern is a faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai, Thailand, Belt and Road International School, Guilin Tourism University, China

### **Brahmantyo, Himawan**

Himawan is an Associate Professor at Trisakti School of Tourism. He has presented many research papers related to Service Quality in Hospitality and Tourism industry. He is also involved in developing villages tourism in Indonesia. His research area is in Service Quality for Hospitality and Tourism, and Sustainable Tourism.

### **Dr. Lihong Yun**

Dr. Yun is currently a lecturer at East Asia Institute of Management. She holds a Ph.D. degree in Economics (Orebro University, Sweden) and had been a research fellow at City University of Hong Kong in 2006-2011. She has published a couple of papers in the international journals such as (1) International Journal of Logistics System and Management; (2) Journal of Industry, Competition and Trade; (3) Review of International Economics and (4) The Chinese Economy. Her general research interests are (1) labour economics and (2) E-commerce. She can be contacted at [ylihong@gmail.com](mailto:ylihong@gmail.com).

### **Engr. Ann Gilyn B. Premarion**

Ann is currently College Dean, STI College-Gen. Santos, Philippines. She graduated with a degree and became licensed Electronics and Communications Engineer in 2001. She completed her master's in mathematics in 2008, became Licensed Professional Teacher (LPT) in 2015, and went on to further complete her Master of Arts in Education majoring in School Administration in 2018. She is currently taking up Ph.D. majoring in Educational Management, at Mindanao State University, Philippines. She can be contacted at [anngilyn.premarion@gensan.sti.edu](mailto:anngilyn.premarion@gensan.sti.edu).



### **Mr Lim Kooi Fong**

Mr. Lim is the founder of the Buddhist Channel ([www.buddhistchannel.tv](http://www.buddhistchannel.tv)) and Buddhist Travel ([www.buddhisttravel.com](http://www.buddhisttravel.com)). He is an avid promoter of Buddhist Tourism and has presented at the Mekong Tourism Forum 2018, Nakhon Phanom and the 1st ASEAN World Heritage Summit 2018 at Sukhothai, both in Thailand. He is also the co-organiser of the upcoming International Buddhist Tourism Conference (IBTC - <http://buddhisttourism.org>). He can be contacted at [kooifong.lim@gmail.com](mailto:kooifong.lim@gmail.com)

### **Ms. Meisie Yang**

Meisie holds a Master of Professional Accounting from Singapore Management University and a Bachelor of Economics from Central University of Finance and Economics University, China. She is a lecturer in East Asia Institute of Management. She was an auditor in Deloitte Singapore and has a wide professional practice experience in accounting industry. She can be contacted at [meisieyoung92@163.com](mailto:meisieyoung92@163.com).

### **Myrza Rahmanita.**

Myrza is Associate Professor, Head of Tourism Graduate Program of Trisakti School of Tourism Indonesia. She is Doctor in Economics; M.Sc. in Tourism and Environmental Management from Bournemouth University; fellow of “AusAID Australian Leadership Awards”. She can be contacted at [myrzarahmanita@stptrisakti.ac.id](mailto:myrzarahmanita@stptrisakti.ac.id)

### **Nurbaeti**

Nurbaeti is Associate Professor, Doctor in Tourism, and Vice President for Finance and of Trisakti School of Tourism.

### **Nurima Rahmitasari**

Rahmitasari is a Master of Science in Tourism graduate and is Assistant Professor, Trisakti School of Tourism. She is also PhD candidate in Guangzhou University, China. She can be contacted at [nurima@stptrisakti.ac.id](mailto:nurima@stptrisakti.ac.id)

### **Rattapon Incharroen**

Rattapon Incharroen is a <sup>6</sup> faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai, Thailand, Belt and Road International School, Guilin Tourism University, China

**Sukanya Kaewwanna**

Sukanya Kaewwanna is a <sup>6</sup> faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai, Thailand, Belt and Road International School, Guilin Tourism University, China

**Tessina L. Nurtanio**

Tessina is a Master of Tourism Management and a Lecturer at Trisakti School of Tourism. She is currently teaching Finance for both Tourism and Hotel Department, and Tour Planning for Tourism Department. She has been involved in tourism surveys for exit passengers held by the Indonesia Tourism of Ministry. Her research area is in finance in tourism, sustainable tourism, and village tourism development.

**Triana Rosalina Dewi**

Dewi is Assistant Professor, Magister iManagement, in Trisakti School of Tourism. She can be contacted at [trianadewi@stptrisakti.ac.id](mailto:trianadewi@stptrisakti.ac.id)

张文娟 **Zhang Wenjuan**

Zhang Wenjuan is a faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai, Thailand, Belt and Road International School, Guilin Tourism University, China

朱锦晟 **Zhu Jinsheng**

Zhu Jinsheng is a faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai, Thailand, Belt and Road International School, Guilin Tourism University, China

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