

SPATIAL LINKAGES IN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN HO CHI MINH CITY UNDER ADMINISTRATIVE BOUNDARY RESTRUCTURING TOWARD GREEN AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

**Cuong Ha Tuan*, Thong Van Do, Vinh Le Bao, Nhan Do Dinh,
Vu Cong Truong, Ngoc Lam Nguyen Thi**

Southern Sub-Institute of Forestry inventory and Planning

*Email: tuancuongdialyk38@gmail.com

Received: 2 March 2026; Revised: 6 May 2026; Accepted: 11 May 2026

ABSTRACT

In the context of administrative boundary restructuring, the integration of Ho Chi Minh City with Binh Duong province and Ba Ria–Vung Tau province has created an expanded tourism space with a larger territorial scale and a more diverse tourism resource base. This study examines spatial linkages in tourism development within a green and sustainable development framework, focusing on tourism resources, transport infrastructure, and tourist mobility flows. Based on theoretical synthesis, secondary data analysis, tourism flow assessment, and spatial mapping, the study identifies a complementary three-subregion structure and an integrated tourism network connecting urban, industrial and craft village, ecological, and coastal spaces. The findings highlight the “*Identity triangle*” and “*One journey – Three experiences*” models, which promote tourism product integration, diversify visitor experiences, and extend visitor stays. The study also identifies potential green tourism corridors based on existing transport networks and low-carbon mobility alternatives. These findings suggest that network-oriented spatial organization can strengthen regional competitiveness and support green and sustainable tourism development in post-restructuring Ho Chi Minh City.

Keywords: Spatial linkages, green tourism, tourism network, sustainable development.

1. INTRODUCTION

The tourism sector has increasingly been recognized as an important component of sustainable territorial development. Tourism development is closely linked to the characteristics and resources of the territories in which it takes place, as different types of tourism depend on specific environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic conditions. Cultural heritage, for example, provides a foundation for historical and cultural tourism, while diverse natural landscapes and ecosystems support nature-based tourism. Likewise, industrial sites and former industrial facilities can provide valuable resources for industrial heritage tourism. By transforming these territorial assets into tourism experiences, tourism can contribute to the conservation, adaptive reuse, and regeneration of cultural, natural, and industrial heritage. In urban areas, this role extends beyond resource utilization, as tourism can support spatial regeneration and contribute to the revitalization of cities [1].

In the context of territorial spatial restructuring and strengthened regional linkages, recent studies indicate a shift in tourism development models from a single destination-based approach to a spatial systems and network-based approach [2, 3]. This approach emphasizes

the integration of tourism resources, transport infrastructure, and tourist mobility flows within an open spatial structure, where destinations operate as nodes in an interconnected network rather than as independent entities [4, 5].

In particular, in expanding urban regions with high levels of connectivity such as Ho Chi Minh city (HCMC), Binh Duong province, and Ba Ria – Vung Tau province, administrative restructuring toward a two-tier governance system and evolving spatial development patterns have created favorable conditions for the formation of interregional tourism corridors. These corridors not only function as physical linkages between different functional areas, but also contribute to reshaping tourism product structures toward a polycentric, multi experiential system integrating ecological, urban, and coastal spaces.

Accordingly, this study examines how administrative restructuring reshapes the spatial organization of the interregional tourism system linking HCM city, Binh Duong, and Ba Ria –Vung Tau, with a focus on the interaction between tourism resources, transport infrastructure, and tourist mobility flows in forming an integrated green tourism structure. Specifically, it addresses three key questions: (i) how restructuring influences spatial linkages and resource organization within the expanded system; (ii) how transport corridors and spatial differentiation contribute to polycentric tourism networks and interregional products; (iii) and to what extent these linkages support green tourism development through improved accessibility, diversified experiences, and reduced carbon intensive travel patterns. The findings are expected to provide a scientific basis for spatial planning, green tourism product development, and sustainable tourism governance in HCMC after administrative restructuring.

2. THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical framework

2.1.1. Perspectives on market, resources, and space

The determinants of tourism growth and competitiveness derive from both supply and demand factors [6], with the spatial dimension playing a critical role in shaping destination performance [7]. Key geographic attributes, including location, accessibility, and the availability of attractions, significantly influence competitiveness. In the context of administrative restructuring in Vietnam, local tourism systems are required to reassess resource advantages and reorganize spatial development and destination branding to generate new growth momentum.

According to Porter (1990) [8], the fundamental conditions for tourism development are resources and capabilities. In the context of tourism destinations, these include natural resources such as tourism landscapes, cultural heritage, climate, and location, tourism infrastructure such as accommodation facilities and attractions, as well as human resources and capital. From a resource-based perspective, competitive advantage strongly depends on the efficiency and effectiveness with which resources are utilized by firms or collaborative networks [9, 10]. Competitive advantage emerges from the integration of these resources into unique tourism products, where technology, expertise, and organizational learning contribute to value creation and form core competencies [11 – 13]. Accordingly, innovation in tourism products and services is central to enhancing competitiveness and improving visitor experiences [14].

In addition, the spatial perspective highlights accessibility as a key determinant of competitiveness, with transport infrastructure enabling the connection between resources and tourist flows [15]. In the experience economy context, destination space becomes increasingly important, and the organization of resources through transport corridors plays a central role in spatial planning and tourism development.

2.1.2. Linkages in tourism product development and spatial organization

In contemporary tourism geography, tourism products are not merely considered as a collection of discrete services but as the outcome of a systematically organized spatial structure in which destinations, travel routes, and tourism regions are closely interconnected. According to Gunn (2002) [16] and Leiper (1990) [17], the tourism system consists of fundamental components including generating regions, transit routes, and destination regions, where the spatial configuration of these components determines the structure and level of tourism development.

One of the key determinants of effective spatial tourism linkage is transportation systems and accessibility. Prideaux (2000) [18] argues that transportation is not only a means of mobility but also a factor shaping destination development structure, as it directly affects travel time costs, travel expenses, and overall trip attractiveness. According to Yan et al. (2024) [19], the degree of integration between transport infrastructure and tourism plays a critical role in promoting sustainable tourism development, particularly in the context of optimizing mobility flows and reducing environmental impacts from tourism activities.

At the regional scale, tourism product linkages are commonly organized through a polycentric spatial model, in which different urban and functional areas complement each other within the tourism value chain. Hall and Page (2014) [20] note that contemporary tourism spatial structures are shifting from centralized models toward network-based systems, where tourist flows move across multiple destinations rather than concentrating in a single core hub. This transition enables the formation of multi destination travel routes, enhances experiential diversity, and helps distribute pressure more evenly across destinations.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Secondary data collection method

The secondary data analysis method is used to systematize theoretical frameworks and empirical studies related to: (i) spatial organization of tourism; (ii) regional linkage in tourism development; and (iii) sustainable tourism and green tourism. Data sources include international scientific publications, research reports, national tourism development planning documents of Vietnam, and regional and local strategic documents. On this basis, the study constructs an analytical framework focusing on the relationship between tourism resources, transport infrastructure, and tourist mobility flows within an interregional spatial system.

To ensure empirical validity of the proposed models for green tourism, this study adopts three key steps.

(i) First, a quantitative assessment is conducted using tourism flow data and market segments from annual tourism reports (in 2024) of HCM City, Binh Duong, and Ba Ria – Vung Tau, providing evidence for the feasibility of the “*Identity triangle*” and “*One journey three experiences*” models.

(ii) Second, infrastructure compatibility is analyzed by evaluating the alignment between existing transport networks and tourism resource clusters to identify potential green tourism corridors.

(iii) Third, a multi-source validation approach integrates national and local datasets to verify the location and functional roles of the recorded tourism resources.

3.2. Mapping method

The mapping method was applied to identify and model the spatial structure of tourism routes connecting HCM city, Binh Duong province, and Ba Ria – Vung Tau province. Key

transport corridors (such as National Highways 13, 51, 22, etc) serve as the backbone infrastructure for organizing tourism space, positioning destinations as functional nodes within an experiential network based on a multipolar model. To ensure compatibility with inter-provincial regional planning standards, a map scale of 1:200,000 was selected. This scale is optimal as it clearly illustrates major transport corridors and critical intersections while preserving the precise geographic detail of individual tourism resources. The geographic database for this inter-regional network was developed through four sequential stages, ensuring absolute consistency between spatial data and attribute data:

(i) First, the database was standardized in ArcGIS 10.8 using the UTM Zone 48N coordinate system.

(ii) Second, multi-source data were collected based on criteria of currency and spatial accuracy, combining spatial layers such as administrative boundaries and transport networks with tourism statistics, supported by Google Earth for location validation.

(iii) Third, data were digitized into vector format, and a representative subset of tourism sites was selected from the full inventory to enhance map readability.

(iv) Finally, spatial layers and selected destinations were integrated and symbolized in ArcGIS to produce a strategic tourism network map at 1:200,000 scale, clearly distinguishing existing infrastructure from proposed tourism corridors.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Tourism development potential of Ho Chi Minh City in the context of administrative boundary restructuring

4.1.1. Context and development drivers

Following the merger with Binh Duong province and Ba Ria – Vung Tau province in July 2025, HCMC has gained significant potential for green tourism development through spatial expansion and the integration of diverse ecosystems. This expanded spatial structure includes the Can Gio mangrove forest, the Dau Tieng reservoir protection forest, coastal ecosystems, as well as agro ecological zones and urban green spaces. As a result, the spatial interconnection of these ecosystems provides a critical foundation for developing diversified and sustainable green tourism products. In the context of climate change and increasing demand for sustainability, this transformation plays a critical role in enhancing destination competitiveness and supporting long term development strategies.

Moreover, the integration of urban, industrial, and coastal ecological spaces has created a complementary resource structure across the region. Within this system, HCMC functions as a central hub for coordination, smart tourism development, and event organization, while Binh Duong contributes industrial tourism and craft village experiences, and Ba Ria – Vung Tau focuses on marine and resort tourism. Therefore, this functional differentiation not only supports product diversification but also enables the development of integrated cross regional tourism experiences, contributing to longer visitor stays and increased tourist expenditure.

On this basis, the development of infrastructure and regional transport networks plays a decisive role in strengthening tourism connectivity and operational efficiency. The expansion of expressways, metro systems, seaports, and Long Thanh International Airport has significantly improved accessibility across the region. In particular, key interregional corridors such as HCMC to Long Thanh to Dau Giay, Ben Luc to Long Thanh, and HCMC to Chon Thanh (located in Dong Nai City) are increasingly shaping specialized tourism development axes. These corridors facilitate more efficient resource utilization while enabling a more balanced redistribution of tourist flows between core urban areas and peripheral destinations.

Furthermore, inland waterway systems and river networks provide additional capacity for developing river based and interregional tourism, especially in response to the growing demand for ecological and experiential travel. Overall, these developments reinforce the role of the administrative merger as a strategic driver for regional integration, spatial optimization, and long-term competitiveness in green tourism development.

4.1.2. The “Identity triangle” in the new Ho Chi Minh City mega tourism model

Spatial differentiation from the three-province integration has established the “*Identity Triangle*” model, a strategic framework for green tourism planning in emerging megacities. Instead of operating independently, the three sub-regions form a complementary interaction mechanism to optimize the tourism value chain [21]. With over 600 officially recorded resources region-wide, this model assigns specialized functional roles to each node based on its resource scale. This approach achieves value chain optimization, product diversification, and enhanced visitor experiences while extending the destination life cycle. This aligns with the “*Tourism Area Life Cycle*” (TALC) theory, where spatial restructuring and product innovation drive the rejuvenation stage [22], and with sustainable tourism principles centered on regional linkage and resource integration [23].

- *The cultural heritage historical experience axis (HCMC – Binh Duong province):* This axis forms an eco-cultural tourism corridor along the Sai Gon River basin. It connects the urban core, which has a leading density of 366 tourism resources according to the 2021 publication on HCMC tourism resources by the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism [24], with transitional industrial and ecological zones that contain 85 distinctive resources in Binh Duong province. Within this framework, urban heritage is redefined through craft village and high-tech experiences, reducing pressure on the constrained urban core [25].

- *The urban resort axis (HCMC & Ba Ria - Vung Tau province):* This linkage creates a dynamic spatial flow from the urban core to coastal ecological areas. The axis connects HCMC with the coastal zone of Ba Ria – Vung Tau province, which includes 230 officially identified tourism sites [26]. It also supports the development of wellness and responsible tourism, thereby enhancing the competitiveness of coastal destinations within sustainable development strategies.

- *The ecological craft cultural axis (Binh Duong province & Ba Ria - Vung Tau province):* This axis emphasizes conservation-oriented connectivity, ensuring the continuity of biodiversity from the northern transitional zone in Binh Duong province to the southern coastal ecosystems in Ba Ria – Vung Tau province. It integrates craft village heritage with coastal natural resources, thereby enabling the development of green tourism routes aligned with resource-based approaches to sustainable tourism.

Overall, the “*Identity triangle*” model resolves spatial differentiation challenges while balancing regional ecology and functions. Integrating these three identities creates a unified destination, expanding carrying capacity and establishing a foundation to position HCMC as a leading green tourism hub.

4.1.3. Empirical validation through tourist flows (tourist flow validation)

Statistical data for 2024 in table 1 demonstrate the feasibility of the “*Identity triangle*” model strategy through interprovincial tourist movements.

Table 1. Tourism overview of HCM City, Ba Ria – Vung Tau, and Binh Duong in 2024 (pre-merger)

Indicator	Ho Chi Minh City	Ba Ria Vung Tau	Binh Duong	Total (3 localities)	National total	Share of 3 localities
Total visitors	44 million	14.4 million	3.2 million	63.3 million	127.5 million	~50%
International visitors	6.0 million	0.26 million	0.35 million	6.61 million	17.5 million	37.80%
Revenue	160,000 billion VND	17,313 billion VND	2,200 billion VND	209,513 billion VND	840,000 billion VND	24.90%

Source: [27 – 30]

In 2024, total tourist arrivals (domestic and international) to HCM City, Ba Ria – Vung Tau, and Binh Duong accounted for nearly 50% of the national total, while their combined tourism revenue contributed about one quarter of Vietnam’s total.

From July 1 in 2025, the official merger formed the country’s first megacity, with over 14 million people across 6,772 km², significantly expanding both spatial scale and tourism resources. The city now offers a fully integrated tourism system ranging from coastal and mangrove ecosystems to urban, industrial, and craft village experiences, including the first intra city flight route (Tan Son Nhat to Con Dao Island). The momentum is supported by a highly diversified “*all in one*” tourism ecosystem with 600 potential destinations, integrating urban heritage, coastal resort tourism, and industrial and craft village experiences. This has enabled the rapid development of integrated tourism products, while improved transport infrastructure, including expressways and the upcoming Long Thanh International Airport, allows diverse experiences within a 1 – 2 hours travel radius.

4.2. Spatial differentiation and green tourism development potential

4.2.1. Specific potential and spatial allocation of green tourism resources

Table 2 summarizes key resource characteristics of the three sub regions, serving as empirical evidence for the transformative potential of green tourism after the merger:

Table 2. Tourism resource and green tourism characteristics of the Ho Chi Minh megacity

Area	Functional zone	Resource characteristics and tourist attractions	Implications for green and sustainable tourism
Ho Chi Minh city	Urban core & green gateway	- Can Gio mangrove ecosystem with more than 34,000 hectares supporting net zero tourism, bird watching, and kayaking,... - Saigon River corridor with water bus and electric ferry system’s connecting urban heritage sites. - Green MICE with certified green hotels and low emission event management.	Reduces the carbon footprint of urban mobility and accommodation; serves as a strategic “ <i>green lung</i> ” for the entire region.
Binh Duong	Agricultural belt & craft village network	- Network of agro tourism and farm stay models: from the heritage orchards of Lai Thieu (southern area) to the smart pomelo village of Bach Dang and the ecological agricultural zones of Dau Tieng and Thanh Tuyen (northern area). - Traditional craft clusters including ceramics, lacquerware, and wood carving villages offering immersive local cultures.	Maintains agricultural ecosystems, prevents urban concretization, and generates sustainable livelihoods for local communities.

Ba Ria – Vung Tau	Resort tourism & marine economy	- Con Dao: marine turtle conservation, coral diving, national park trekking, beach recreation, and strictly plastic waste reduction-oriented tourism. - Binh Chau – Phuoc Buu: integration of coastal forest and natural hot springs for wellness and therapeutic tourism. - Ho Tram – Long Hai: sustainable resort corridor applying eco architecture, and locally sourced materials. - Nui Dinh – Phu My: Forest ecosystems, streams, caves, and revolutionary heritage sites supporting ecotourism, trekking, nature-based and heritage tourism. - Vung Tau – Long Son – Go Gang: Coastal landscapes, urban beaches, island and estuarine ecosystems, seafood culture, and community-based tourism.	Balances marine and forest resource exploitation with biodiversity conservation; promotes regenerative wellness tourism experiences.
-------------------	---------------------------------	--	--

4.2.2. Interregional connectivity infrastructure for low carbon tourism development

Within this interregional structure, HCMC functions as the central hub for tourist distribution, supported by a metro system and electric bus network aligned with compact urban development principles. Binh Duong province serves as a functional buffer zone where industrial transformation and green transition support inter urban connectivity and short stay tourism development. Ba Ria – Vung Tau province operates as the primary coastal and ecological tourism destination supported by water transport and expressway systems (summarized in table 3). The formation of the HCMC tourism megacity is not merely a spatial expansion but a structural reconfiguration driven by institutional frameworks aimed at reducing the carbon footprint of tourism activities.

Table 3. Inter-regional transport infrastructure

Indicator	Ho Chi Minh City	Binh Duong province	Ba Ria – Vung Tau province
Green mobility accessibility	Metro Line 1 (Ben Thanh – Suoi Tien station), urban electric bus system, TOD oriented development framework.	Inter provincial bus network, major transport corridors along National Highway 13 and Ring Road 3.	Proposed regional high speed waterway transport (Can Gio – Vung Tau), electric vehicles dedicated to tourism mobility.
Travel time accessibility	–	30 – 45 minutes to HCMC	60 – 90 minutes to HCMC (via Bien Hoa – Vung Tau expressway)
Green tourism accommodation capacity	High density of 4 – 5-star hotels, with a growing share meeting ESG standards	Medium density; eco farm stays and riverside resort accommodations	High density of eco resorts and hotels
Sustainable tourism function	Urban tourism service and transit hub	Ecological buffer zone combining green industry transition and weekend retreat tourism	Coastal and ecological tourism core destination

Although interregional corridors such as National Highways 13 and 51 and the Bien Hoa to Vung Tau expressway... reduce travel time, they also generate substantial carbon emissions.

Empirical studies have shown that transport is a primary driver of greenhouse gas emissions in global tourism systems [31, 32]. Without a transition toward carbon neutral mobility, emissions from private vehicle flows, particularly during peak periods, may undermine regional green growth objectives.

- For the HCMC to Binh Duong axis, priorities include clean energy *Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)* systems aligned with *Transit Oriented Development (TOD)* and the expansion of green waterway transport along the Sai Gon River.

- For the HCMC to Ba Ria – Vung Tau axis, alternatives involve high speed water transport and a synchronized electric vehicle charging network to support low emission mobility. In parallel, accommodation systems must function as ecological buffers by integrating renewable energy and local supply chains to minimize indirect carbon footprints.

4.3. Development of an integrated tourism route map for green regional tourism between Ho Chi Minh city, Binh Duong province, and Ba Ria – Vung Tau province

To model the green tourism corridors, this study establishes a spatial analysis framework based on the classification of transport infrastructure types and regional ecological characteristics. Rather than direct emission measurement, this article relies on the operational characteristics of regional transport modes to identify potential high-emission axes and alternative green corridors. This approach enables the identification of priority conservation areas (natural carbon sinks) and low-emission transport routes, providing the foundational input for the Net Zero strategic map (table 4).

Table 4. Criteria for establishing green tourism corridors

Analysis Criteria	Basis for route development	Characteristics and Basis	Role in Net Zero Strategy
High emission corridors	NH13, NH51, NH22	Major road corridors dominated by fossil fuel-based transport and high tourist traffic	Priority zones for emission reduction and transition to low carbon mobility
Proposed green corridors	Saigon River, Can Gio ferry	Inland and coastal waterway connecting HCM City, Binh Duong, and Ba Ria – Vung Tau	Backbone of low emission transport, reducing reliance on road networks
Public transit network	Metro Line 1	Urban rail system linking the city center to eastern development areas	Supports TODs, reducing private vehicle use and emissions
Carbon sinks	Can Gio, Binh Chau Phuoc Buu	Dense ecosystems including mangroves and primary forests	Act as natural carbon sinks, offsetting tourism related greenhouse gas emissions

The spatial network is modeled through the integration of low-carbon transportation corridors and identified carbon sinks, establishing four primary experimental routes:

Route 1. Coastal mangrove ecological corridor

- Structure: Developed along strategic axes including Rung Sac Road, the Can Gio – Vung Tau ferry line, National Highway 51 (NH51), and National Highway 55 (NH55).

- Characteristics: This route connects the Can Gio mangrove ecosystem with the coastal resort clusters of Ba Ria – Vung Tau. It serves as a flagship Net-Zero corridor, leveraging natural buffer zones to sequester carbon emissions.

Route 2. Urban-buffer coastal corridor

- Structure: Along NH13 and NH51, HCMC functioning as the central hub linking Binh Duong's industrial urban areas with the coastal destinations of Ba Ria – Vung Tau.

- Characteristics: Operating as a multi-nodal system rather than a linear corridor, this network is supported by intermediate linkages such as the Tan Van axis and the Thu Duc – Cat Lai – Nhon Trach route. It optimizes tourist flow distribution between economic centers and recreational zones.

Route 3. Smart urban corridor

- Structure: Utilizing the high-capacity public transit of Metro Line 1 (Ben Thanh – Suoi Tien Station), with a transition to the NH51 axis toward Vung Tau City.

- Characteristics: This route focuses on reducing individual vehicle dependence by utilizing urban rail for the initial leg. At the Suoi Tien transit hub, flows are directed toward electric or clean-energy shuttles to continue along NH51, operationalizing carbon footprint reduction on the region's primary arterial road.

Route 4. Heritage inland waterway journey

- Structure: Developed along the Saigon River corridor, starting from Bach Dang wharf, traversing the fruit-growing areas of Binh Duong, and terminating at the strategic transit node of Binh Khanh ferry and Bach Dang wharf.

- Characteristics: This route shifts the focus from road to water transport, connecting urban architectural heritage with traditional craft village spaces. The Binh Khanh ferry serves as a vital green node, seamlessly linking the northern waterway system with the southern ecological zones.

Figure 1 illustrates the main tourism routes developed along existing transportation corridors in HCMC and neighboring provinces. The map also highlights key tourism centers and distinctive tourist attractions within HCMC following the administrative merger.

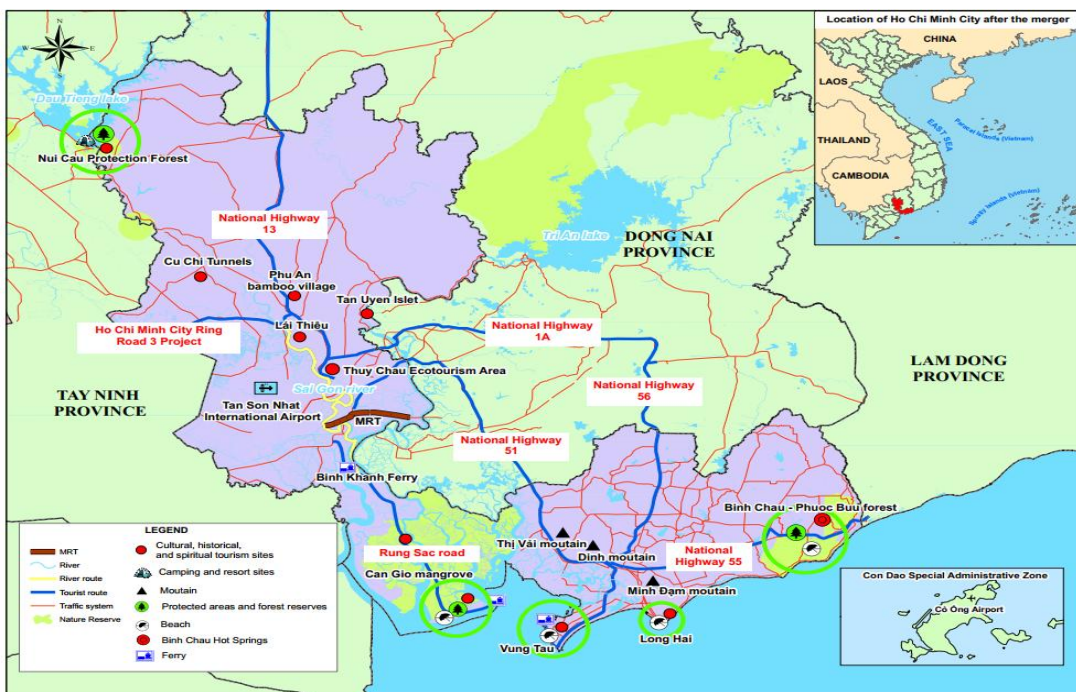


Figure 1. Tourism route network map connecting destinations and tourism center.

Source: Authors, 2026

Con Dao special ecological node in HCMC: To mitigate transit emissions, Con Dao integrates spiritual heritage with regenerative eco-tourism (sea turtle and coral conservation). Development prioritizes green mobility via EVs and bicycles, alongside strict plastic-waste reduction policies. This approach preserves biodiversity and pristine natural values, positioning Con Dao as a flagship model for responsible green tourism within the regional network. The tourism network is structured around the Con Dao national park boundary, ensuring that tourist activities: ranging from diving to forest trekking and remain integrated within a strictly monitored ecological framework to maintain the island's pristine environment.

4.4. Policy recommendations for green tourism development after administrative restructuring in Ho Chi Minh City

Based on the spatial restructuring and expansion process, HCMC has the opportunity to reposition itself as a regional tourism coordination hub. The integration with Binh Duong province and Ba Ria – Vung Tau province not only increases resource scale but also enables the formation of integrated, polycentric, and sustainable tourism structures.

First, spatial integrated planning linked with interregional infrastructure should be prioritized through the development of strategic tourism corridors such as the Saigon River corridor and the coastal corridor between HCMC and Ba Ria – Vung Tau province. Multimodal transport systems including metro, waterways, and regional connections should be integrated to improve accessibility and efficiency.

Second, tourism product development should shift toward experience based and place specific models. Community based tourism in peripheral areas such as Can Gio and Cu Chi should be upgraded through professionalization and resource conservation, while urban night economy development should be promoted to extend visitor length of stay.

Third, digital transformation should be considered the foundation of destination governance in an expanded spatial context. Integrated databases for tourism resources and activities should be developed to enable data driven management.

Finally, institutional coordination mechanisms at the regional level must be strengthened to ensure standardized service quality, coordinated promotion strategies, and effective crisis management. Investment incentives should prioritize green tourism, sustainable tourism, and tourism technology to enhance innovation and competitiveness across the system.

5. CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the administrative territorial restructuring among HCMC, Binh Duong province, and Ba Ria – Vung Tau province has marked a strategic turning point, shifting the regional tourism structure from fragmented destinations toward an integrated, multi nodal network system. The findings reveal a clear spatial reconfiguration of tourism organization through functional corridors and connected transport infrastructure. The emerging “*One journey - Three experiences*” model not only demonstrates strong potential for diversifying tourism products but also contributes to extending visitor length of stay and enhancing the overall competitiveness of the entire region under the new development context. The integration of coastal ecological resources, modern urban spaces, and industrial craft clusters has established a solid foundation for green and sustainable tourism development.

In summary, the establishment of spatial linkages plays a critical role in reorganizing tourist flows, optimizing accessibility, and supporting low carbon tourism development objectives. The results of this study emphasize that network oriented spatial planning is an essential requirement for strengthening sustainable growth in the post restructuring HCMC megaregion.

REFERENCES

- [1] B. El Faouri and M. Sibley, "Heritage led urban regeneration in the context of WH listing: lessons and opportunities for the newly inscribed city of As Salt in Jordan," *Sustainability*, vol. 14, no. 8, p. 4557, Apr. 2022, doi: <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14084557>
- [2] S. Saraniemi and M. Kylänen, "Problemizing the concept of tourism destination: an analysis of different theoretical approaches," *Journal of Travel Research*, vol. 50, no. 2, pp. 133–143, Mar. 2011, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287510362775>
- [3] D. Dredge, "Policy Networks and the Local Organisation of Tourism," *Tourism Management*, vol. 27, no. 2, pp. 269–280, 2006, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2004.10.003>
- [4] R. Baggio, N. Scott, and C. Cooper, "Improving tourism destination governance: a complexity science approach," *Tourism Review*, vol. 65, no. 4, pp. 51–60, 2010, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1108/16605371011093863>
- [5] J. Larsen, J. Urry, and K. W. Axhausen, "Networks and tourism mobilities," *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 34, no. 1, pp. 244–262, 2007, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2006.08.002>
- [6] R. Purwono, M. A. Esquivias, L. Sugiharti, and O. Rojas, "Tourism Destination Performance and Competitiveness: The Impact on Revenues, Jobs, the Economy, and Growth," *Journal of Tourism and Services*, vol. 15, no. 28, pp. 161–187, Jun. 2024, doi: <https://doi.org/10.29036/jots.v15i28.629>
- [7] World Bank, *Resilient Tourism: Competitiveness in the Face of Disasters*. Washington, DC, USA: World Bank, 2020.
- [8] M. E. Porter, *The Competitive Advantage of Nations*. New York, NY, USA: Free Press, 1990.
- [9] B. Wernerfelt, "The Resource-Based View of the Firm," *Strategic Management Journal*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 171–180, Apr.–Jun. 1984, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.4250050207>
- [10] J. B. Barney, "Firm Resources and Sustained Competitive Advantage," *Journal of Management*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 99–120, Mar. 1991, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/014920639101700108>
- [11] C. K. Prahalad and G. Hamel, "The core competence of the corporation," *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 68, no. 3, pp. 275–292, May–Jun. 1990.
- [12] J. B. Quinn, *Intelligent Enterprise: A Knowledge and Service Based Paradigm for Industry*. New York, NY, USA: The Free Press, 1990.
- [13] F. d'Angella and F. M. Go, "Tale of two cities' collaborative tourism marketing: towards a theory of destination stakeholder assessment," *Tourism Management*, vol. 30, no. 3, pp. 429–440, Jun. 2009, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2008.07.011>
- [14] H. Pechlaner, E. Fischer, and E. -M. Hammann, "Leadership and Innovation Processes – Development of Products and Services Based on Core Competencies," *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, vol. 6, no. 3-4, pp. 31–57, Jun. 2006, doi: https://doi.org/10.1300/J162v06n03_03
- [15] World Tourism Organization, "Issues of measurement of environmental and social sustainability of tourism," presented at the *Int. Workshop on Tourism Statistics*, UNWTO Headquarters, Madrid, Spain, Jul. 17–20, 2006.

- [16] C. A. Gunn and T. Var, *Tourism Planning: Basics, Concepts, Cases*, 4th ed. New York, NY, USA: Routledge, 2002.
- [17] G. Richards, "Tourism attraction systems," *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 29, no. 4, pp. 1048–1064, Oct. 2002, doi: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383\(02\)00026-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383(02)00026-9)
- [18] B. Prideaux, "The role of the transport system in destination development," *Tourism Management*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 53–63, Feb. 2000, doi: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177\(99\)00079-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177(99)00079-5)
- [19] Y. Yan and C. Phucharoen, "Tourism Transport-Related CO2 Emissions and Economic Growth: A Deeper Perspective from Decomposing Driving Effects," *Sustainability*, vol. 16, no. 8, art. no. 3135, 2024, doi: <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16083135>
- [20] C. M. Hall and S. J. Page, *The Geography of Tourism and Recreation: Environment, Place and Space*, 4th ed. London, UK: Routledge, 2014, doi: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203796092>
- [21] Vietnam National Authority of Tourism, "Ho Chi Minh City is a rare 'identity triangle' of tourism in the Southeast region," Aug. 10, 2025. [Online]. Available: <https://vietnamtourism.gov.vn/post/64229> (in Vietnamese).
- [22] R. W. Butler, "The concept of a tourist area cycle of evolution: implications for management of resources," *The Canadian Geographer / Le Géographe canadien*, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 5–12, Mar. 1980, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0064.1980.tb00970.x>.
- [23] World Tourism Organization, *Tourism for Development – Volume I: Key Areas for Action*. Madrid, Spain: UNWTO, 2018, doi: 10.18111/9789284419722.
- [24] Vietnam National Authority of Tourism, "Ho Chi Minh City announces the Tourism Resources Database and the new version of the Tourism Promotion Portal," *Vietnam National Authority of Tourism*, Dec. 15, 2021. [Online]. Available: <https://vietnamtourism.gov.vn/post/38206>. (in Vietnamese).
- [25] C. M. Hall, *Tourism Planning: Policies, Processes and Relationships*, 2nd ed. Harlow, UK: Pearson Education, 2008.
- [26] N. Giang, "Ba Ria–Vung Tau announces 230 destinations and 54 tours and routes," *Nguoi Lao Dong Newspaper*, Oct. 25, 2024. [Online]. Available: <https://nld.com.vn/ba-ria-vung-tau-cong-bo-230-diem-den-va-54-tour-tuyen-196241025110857674.htm>. (in Vietnamese).
- [27] Vietnam National Authority of Tourism, "Binh Duong: Tourism revenue estimated at VND 1.79 trillion," *Vietnam National Authority of Tourism*, Sep. 11, 2024. [Online]. Available: <https://vietnamtourism.gov.vn/post/59102>. (in Vietnamese).
- [28] Vietnam National Authority of Tourism, "More than 14.4 million tourists visited Ba Ria–Vung Tau in the first 10 months of 2024," *Vietnam National Authority of Tourism*, Oct. 29, 2024. [Online]. Available: <https://vietnamtourism.gov.vn/post/59299>. (in Vietnamese).
- [29] Ho Chi Minh City Department of Tourism, "Report No. 3071/BC-SDL on tourism development in 2024 and the plan for 2025," *Ho Chi Minh City Department of Tourism*, annual report, 2024. (in Vietnamese).
- [30] Vietnam National Authority of Tourism, "Ho Chi Minh City after the administrative merger: Tourism takes off spectacularly with billion-dollar revenue," *Vietnam National Authority of Tourism*, Aug. 1, 2025. [Online]. Available: <https://vietnamtourism.gov.vn/post/64086>. (in Vietnamese).

- [31] M. Lenzen, Y. -Y. Sun, F. Faturay, Y. P. Ting, B. Geschke, and A. Malik, "The carbon footprint of global tourism," *Nature Climate Change*, vol. 8, no. 6, pp. 522–528, Jun. 2018, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-018-0141-x>
- [32] P. Peeters, J. Higham, S. Cohen, E. Eijgelaar, and S. Gössling, "Desirable tourism transport futures," *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, vol. 27, no. 2, pp. 173–188, Feb. 2019, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2018.1477785>