**THE EFFICIENCY OF YOGA TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF HUAHIN, THAILAND**

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**Extended abstract**

The aim of this research is to study yoga tourism destination development: a case study of HuaHin, Thailand. Yoga tourism is part of wellness tourism (Ali-Knight & Ensor ,2017; Smith & Puczkó, 2009). Nowadays, significant numbers of people tend to seek for health well-being in life, since in everyday life many of them are facing with high tension and stress, thus leading to the needs of body, mind and spiritual restoration and healing (Mueller & Kaufmann, 2001). Despite the significant trend of body and mind recovery increasing gradually, some study is still needed for exploration within this area. Past studies have focused on a preliminary study of yoga, niche marketing strategy, and motivation (Lehto, Brown, Chen, & Morrison, 2006; Öznalbant & Alvarez, 2019). However, yoga tourism destinations from a stakeholder perception has had less investigation, hence this study intends to bridge this gab, particularly in this Thailand case study.

This study used a quantitative approach by collecting data through online survey questionnaires. The samples were discovered by firstly contacting yoga studio managers or owners and yoga association presidents/committees; once permission was given the researcher began to collect data and distribute the survey questionnaire forms to our target samples. A total of 400 samples were received, coming from many countries around the world. The data were analyzed by using Pearson’s Correlation and Multiple Linear Regression Analysis technique. It was found that there are two main yoga element resources to consider when developing for tourism destination: firstly, core resources, and secondly supporting element resources.

It was found that for core resources development the following are factors influencing tourist satisfaction: all activity related to physical and mind wellness; authentic yoga practice style; service quality strategy; destination attraction for yoga practice; sufficient areas and equipment to suit with yoga practice; expertise of yoga instructors; and good reputation of a yoga destination. For yoga tourism destination development (YDD) the supporting element resource factors influencing tourists satisfaction are: good accessibilities; amenities; accommodations; and good promotion for a variety of yoga activity at a destination. On the contrary, infrastructure including electric power system; water supply system; roads and internet (Wi-fi) had no influence on tourist satisfaction. The recommendations can be implemented in order to develop a plan to better suit both domestic and international yoga tourists.

**Keywords –** Wellness Tourism; Yoga Tourism**;** Yoga Destination Development (YDD)**;** Core resources for YDD**;** Supporting elements for YDD**;** Yoga Tourist Satisfaction

**Purpose/Problem Statement** **-** The aim of this research paper is to study yoga destination development: a case study of HuaHin, Thailand. Many past studies have focused on the experience of yoga tourism, yoga tourism motivation, the emerging phenomenon of yoga tourism, the impact of yoga tourism, and marketing of yoga tourism. However, research that directly focuses on the development of yoga tourism is relatively scarce, especially, for the many in Thailand most of them have studied yoga in the field of medicine and the physical education context.

**Originality/value** **–** This research develops a theoretical framework for yoga destination development (YDD). The two main components for developing yoga destination development are core resources and supporting elements. The core resources comprise: place, for instance, availability of yoga practice areas and equipment; attraction of the yoga practice area; the reputation of a yoga destination, personnel, for instance expertise of the yoga instructors; service providers; the characteristics of yoga, such as authentic yoga and wellness activity. Furthermore, the supporting elements are accessibilities; amenities; accommodations variety; and promotion of a yoga destination.

**Design/methodology/approach** **–** A quantitative approach used online questionnaires for the collecting of data. The study's data were analyzed using a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), with Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Linear Regression Analysis.

**Findings/Discussion** **–** The results found that the components of yoga destination development in terms of core resources had a moderate influence on tourist satisfaction, especially for wellness activities, authentic yoga, service providers, attraction of yoga practice areas, availability of yoga practice areas and equipment, expertise of the yoga instructors, and reputation of the yoga attraction. Furthermore, there is no significant influence in terms of safety, availability of yoga instructors and the variety of types of yoga with tourist satisfaction. Therefore, tourism stakeholders involved in the development of yoga tourism should concentrate on expanding the types of yoga available so that tourists with varying yoga interests can be accommodated. For yoga tourism destination development (YDD)the supporting elements positively influenced tourist satisfaction at a moderate level, especially for accommodations, amenities, promotion of yoga destinations, accessibilities and the variety of yoga destinations. On the contrary, infrastructure had no influence on tourist satisfaction. Therefore, tourism stakeholders involved in the development of yoga tourism should concentrate on enhancing infrastructure, including the various road routes, electricity system, water supply system, and the Internet (Wi-Fi) that may be used more efficiently in public areas.

**Theoretical implications –** This study proposed a theoretical framework for the efficiency of yoga tourism development: a case study of HuaHin, Thailand. It consists of two important structures: firstly, yoga destination development in term of core resources; secondly, yoga destination development in term of supporting elements.

**Practical implications –** Tourism stakeholders, yoga studio owners, beachside restaurant owners, and government sectors are able to apply the findings of the study to establish effective yoga destinations, react to the needs of yoga tourists, and promote the image of yoga tourism in the future for such yoga centers.

**Social implications (Policy contribution) –** The developer should formulate policies and improve plans for yoga tourism as a framework for development, which include the establishment of a yoga association to be the main host impelling concrete yoga tourism, and for the creation of an international yoga network to expand the yoga tourism market widely.

**Research limitations –** In-depth studies from the perspective of yoga tourists could be conducted in the future to collect insights from yoga tourists, entrepreneurs, and government sectors. This will result in a clearer development of yoga tourism in each issue. The limitation of this study is that it was conducted during the COVID-19 outbreak; thus, researchers must consider the health of tourists as a priority.

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