# Tourism Management Model to Support Tourists Digital NOMADs Sumui Island, Surat Thani Province

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the current status of tourist attractions for NOMAD tourists, study the problems of tourist attractions for NOMAD tourists, study the factors affecting the decision to choose Koh Samui as a tourist attraction for NOMAD tourists, study the level of satisfaction of NOMAD tourists with tourist attractions on Koh Samui, and to propose recommendations for the development of Koh Samui as a tourist attraction for NOMAD tourists. This study was a mixed-method research, collecting data from 385 tourists using simple random sampling, tourism experts and tourism agency executives using purposive sampling, and analyzing the data using descriptive statistics, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and multiple regression analysis. The findings reveal that (1) the current status of tourist attractions on Koh Samui for NOMAD tourists is ready in terms of infrastructure, internet connection, a variety of accommodations, and tourist activities that support the lifestyle of this group. (2) The problems of tourist attractions for NOMAD tourists, including infrastructure, environmental management, availability of affordable accommodations, and specific tourism promotion policies, are still important obstacles in developing tourist attractions for this group of tourists to be sustainable and able to support long-term growth. (3) The factors affecting the decision to choose Koh Samui as a tourist attraction for NOMAD tourists include tourist behavior and tourism stimuli. Factors related to tourism perspectives, social factors, and tourism service characteristics (4) The overall marketing mix of Koh Samui development as a NOMAD tourist destination was found to be at a high level. (5) The development model of Koh Samui as a NOMAD tourist destination should take into account several factors that are consistent with the needs of this group of tourists, focusing on the convenience of working remotely, access to technology, and flexible lifestyles, including internet infrastructure, accommodation that supports remote working, leisure and community activities, community facilities, long-term tourism promotion policies.

**Keywords:** Digital NOMADs Tourist Destinations, Digital NOMADs, Koh Samui, Tourism Development

## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, technology and information play an important role in every dimension of life, whether it is communication, business, education, or even social relationships. The advancement of the Internet and digital technology has made the world more connected. Information spreads rapidly, and there is a borderless cultural and economic exchange. Remote work has increased worldwide due to the use of the Work From Home policy to prevent the spread of the disease. This has allowed many companies to adjust their work styles to Remote Work or Hybrid Work, where employees and entrepreneurs can work from anywhere (Work From Anywhere). Many of this group have also started looking for a workplace that is 'worth visiting', with tourist attractions abroad that have convenient infrastructure but are not expensive to live in (Atcha Rattanaopas, 2022).

Digital NOMADs are freelancers who travel to different places, working in coffee shops or co-working spaces, using devices that can connect to the internet as their main source of work. Digital NOMADs differ from freelancers in that they are travelers, meaning they travel while working online. They also differ from expatriates in several ways, such as their independent work, not tied to an office space, making Digital NOMADs more similar to tourists (Tourism Marketing Research Division (TAT), 2021). The United Nations Development Programme (2020) defines Digital Nomads as people who work from countries other than their own, work remotely using technology as a medium, and do not have a permanent residence. In tourism studies, Digital NOMADs refer to people who travel to different cities around the world to relax while working, without having to be in a traditional office, and use digital technology to gain freedom from constraints (Atcha Rattanaopas, 2022).

A Brother Abroad's 2022 report stated that there are approximately 35 million digital NOMADs worldwide, and it is estimated that by 2035, there will be over 1 billion digital NOMADs worldwide, generating a global economic value of 787 billion US dollars per year. Most digital nomads work in IT, marketing, or e-commerce, and are a group that loves to travel, which helps stimulate Thailand's tourism sector. The digital nomad group is also unique from the general tourist group in that they have an average stay of more than 6 months in Thailand, resulting in spending 56 percent more than the general tourist group. They are also a group that does not have a specific tourist season like general tourists, meaning they can travel all year round. In addition, according to the Tourism Authority of Thailand, the digital nomad group in Thailand has a monthly expense of approximately 65,034 baht per person, divided into daily expenses such as food, travel, and activities of 33,310 baht per person and accommodation expenses of 31,724 baht per person. The digital nomad group tends to choose flexible workspaces or use co-working spaces (Cook, 2022).

Digital NOMADs in Thailand tend to have high recurring behavior. They also have a high average return to the same city and increase the length of stay in Thailand. Tourists are interested in Thailand's reputation as a Digital NOMAD destination, the hospitality and service of Thai people, friendliness to the LGBTQ+ group, the uniqueness of tourist activities, and the variety of food and beverages (Atcha Rattanaopas, 2022). The city with the highest average stay of Digital NOMADs is Koh Phangan, Surat Thani, with an average of 206 days, and the shortest average stay is Phuket, with 58 days. The top 5 occupation groups of Digital Nomads in Thailand are 1) Software and website development, 2) Marketing, 3) Software as a Service (SaaS) 4) Entrepreneur/Founder (Startup), and 5) Data Analyst. They travel from more than 43 countries around the world. The majority come from Europe (including Russia) (63%), Asia (19%), America (15%) and Australia (3%). However, no Digital Nomads originating from Africa have been found. The top 10 countries of origin of Digital NOMADs in Thailand are Russia, Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom, Israel, France, the Netherlands, China, Australia and Poland (in that order) (Tawisa Srisawat and Chuliporn Tawisri, 2022).

Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province is an important tourist destination that can generate a huge income for Thailand each year. There is a growth in technology to support digital nomad tourists in terms of tourist attractions, hotels, and various facilities. From the above information, it was found that Thailand is an interesting destination for digital nomad tourists and Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province has facilities suitable for long-term stay. However, such studies still have few research results and lack of studies on tourist management to support digital nomad tourists, which is very important for sustainable economic, social, and environmental development, especially in Thailand where tourism is one of the main economic sectors. Good management helps tourist attractions to continuously attract tourists while preserving natural resources and local cultures so that tourist attractions can continuously and sustainably attract tourists in the long term. Therefore, the researcher is interested in studying the management approach for tourism to support digital nomad tourists on Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province.

## Research Objectives

1. To study the potential of tourism to support Digital NOMADs on Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province
2. To study the marketing mix of Digital NOMADs on Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province
3. To study the factors affecting the decision to choose Koh Samui as a tourist destination for Digital NOMADs
4. To study the management approach for tourism to support Digital NOMADs on Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province

## Research Hypothesis

1. Factors in tourism behavior affecting the decision-making factors to choose Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province as a tourist destination for Digital NOMADs.
2. Factors in marketing mix affecting the decision-making factors to choose Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province as a tourist destination for Digital NOMADs.

**Research Question**

What are the guidelines for tourism management in Koh Samui to support digital nomad tourists?

**Concept of Marketing Mix**

The 7Ps of Marketing Mix theory is an extension of the 4P model developed by E. Jerome McCarthy in 1960, which consists of Product, Price, Place and Promotion. Later in 1981, scholars Bernard H. Booms and Mary J. Bitner extended this model to cover service marketing by adding 3 more elements: People, Process and Physical Evidence, as follows:
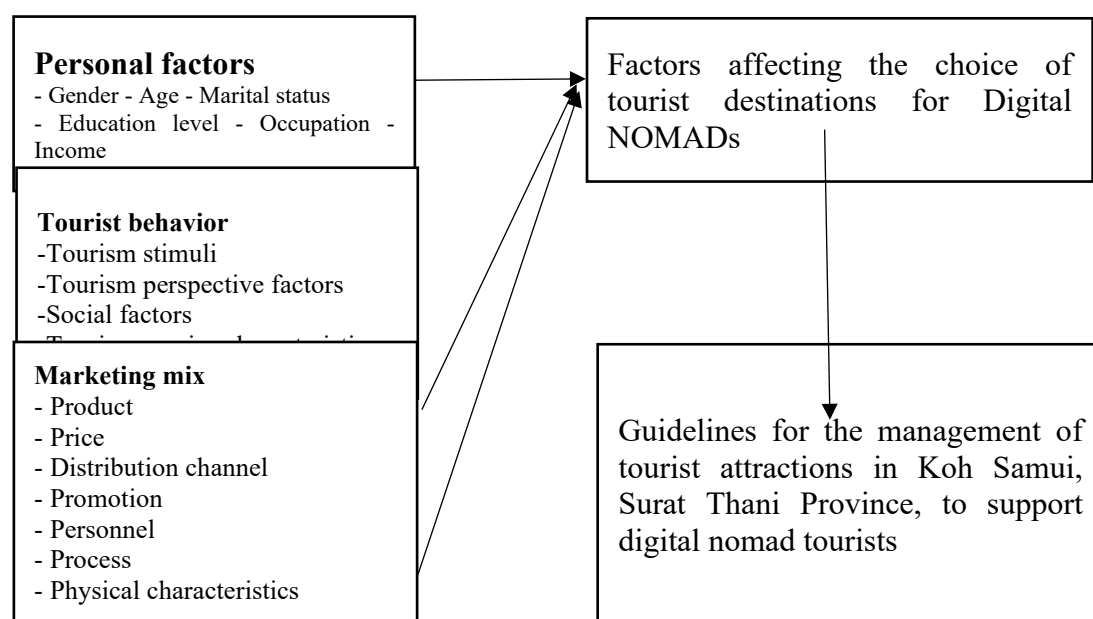
1. Product means something that can be offered to the market to attract attention, obtain, use or consume, which can satisfy the needs or desires of consumers. Products are not limited to tangible things, but also include services, experiences, events, people, places, organizations, information and various ideas. The components of a product include: Core Product is the main benefit or value that customers receive from using the product, which satisfies the basic needs of customers. Actual Product is the tangible form of the product, such as design, quality, brand and packaging. Augmented Product is an additional service or feature that adds value to the product, such as warranty, after-sales service, and delivery (Siriwan Sereerat et al., 2009).

2. 2 Price: Price refers to the amount of money that must be paid to receive the company's products, products, and services, or it may be the total value that the customer perceives in order to receive benefits from using the products, products, and services that are worth the money paid (Kotler & Armstrong, 2009).

3. 3 Distribution Channel: Place/Channel Distribution refers to delivering the products or services to consumers in order to meet their needs. There are criteria that must be considered to be who the target group is and through which channels the products and services should be distributed to consumers in the most appropriate way.

4. 4 Promotion refers to marketing communication tools. To create motivation (Motivation), thinking (Thinking), feeling (Feeling), need (Need) and satisfaction (Satisfaction) by motivating target customers to want the product (Siriwan Sereerat et al., 2003). The tools used in integrated marketing promotion consist of 5 main tools: 1. Advertising refers to activities to disseminate information, news to create motivation and demand to buy products and/or services. 2. Publicity and Public Relations refers to the presentation of individuals' ideas about products and/or services, which may be in the form of paid compensation or not. 3. Public Relations refers to attempts to communicate information from the sender to the recipient who is the target group. 4. Personal Selling Selling products with two-way communication (Two-ways Communication) Sales Promotion Marketing activities that will help increase the volume of sales of products and/or services by using various methods. 5. Direct Marketing is a marketing channel that can directly reach target consumers to present products and/or services. No need to use a middleman to act as a coordinator

5. People refers to employees who work to benefit the organization, including business owners, senior executives, middle executives, lower executives, general employees, housewives, to drive the organization in the strategic direction.

6. Physical Evidence refers to what customers can experience from choosing the organization's products and/or services. It is a distinctive difference and quality, such as shop decoration, food plating style, staff attire, talking to customers, fast service, etc. These things are necessary for business operations, especially service businesses that should create overall quality, which is the physical condition that customers can see, the physical characteristics that customers are satisfied with (Somwong Phongsathaprom, 2003).

7. Process refers to activities related to the procedures and practices in service that are presented to service users in order to provide services correctly and quickly. Each process has many activities, depending on the format and methods of the organization's operations (Kanokphan Sukrit, 2014).

**Concept of Digital Nomad**

Digital Nomad refers to people who can work remotely via the internet while traveling to different locations regardless of their workplace, such as a coffee shop or co-working space. They differ from other travel groups by having two distinctive characteristics: mobility and work focus. The Digital Nomad group has both high mobility and work focus. From a study of 1,500 digital nomads and 30 in-depth interviews in different areas of Thailand, such as Chiang Mai, Bangkok, Pattaya, Khon Kaen, Nakhon Ratchasima, Koh Phangan, Surat Thani, and Phuket, it was found that the demographic characteristics: Most are male, aged 21-40 (Millennials and Gen Z), single, like to travel alone or with friends, and have a bachelor's degree. Purpose Travel for tourism and remote work. Most of them travel to Thailand for the first time and stay no more than 1 month, but make an average of 2-6 trips per year. Average length of stay Koh Phangan has the highest average length of stay at 206 days, while Phuket has the

lowest average length of stay at 58 days. Popular occupations Comprising software and website development, marketing, software services (SaaS), entrepreneurs/founders (Startup), and data analysts, this group of tourists comes from over 43 countries around the world, with the majority coming from Europe (including Russia) at 63%, Asia at 19%, America at 15%, and Australia at 3%. The top 10 countries of origin are Russia, Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom, Israel, France, the Netherlands, China, Australia, and Poland. This data reflects Thailand's growing role as a popular destination for digital nomads, especially in cities with facilities and environments suitable for flexible working and living (Twisa Srisawat and Chuliporn Taweesri, 2022).

## Conceptual Framework

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┌─────────────────────────────────┐          ┌──────────────────────────────┐
│ Personal factors                │          │ Factors affecting the choice │
│ - Gender - Age - Marital status │─────────▶│ of tourist destinations for  │
│ - Education level - Occupation -│          │ Digital NOMADs               │
│ Income                          │          │                              │
│                                 │          └──────────────────────────────┘
│ Tourist behavior                │                         │
│ -Tourism stimuli                │                         │
│ -Tourism perspective factors    │                         ▼
│ -Social factors                 │          ┌──────────────────────────────┐
│                                 │          │ Guidelines for the management│
│ Marketing mix                   │          │ of tourist attractions in Koh│
│ - Product                       │          │ Samui, Surat Thani Province, │
│ - Price                         │          │ to support digital nomad     │
│ - Distribution channel          │          │ tourists                     │
│ - Promotion                     │          └──────────────────────────────┘
│ - Personnel                     │
│ - Process                       │
│ - Physical characteristics      │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
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# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this research, the researcher planned to conduct the research according to the research methodology, mixed-method research format.

## Population and Sample are divided into 2 Groups:

The population studied in this study is foreign tourists who travel to Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province. The exact population is unknown. Therefore, the researcher determined the sample group using the W.G. Cochran formula at a 95% confidence level, resulting in 385 people. The researcher collected additional information for convenience, totaling 400 people, with the following selection criteria: 1. Foreign tourists who can communicate in English 2. Digital nomads who work and travel in Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province 3. The researcher randomly selected groups without a system using the accidental method.

1.2 Qualitative research key informants In-Depth Interview and Focus Group Discussion The key informants were selected based on the following criteria: (1) Executives of tourism businesses in Koh Samui Surat Thani Province for at least 3 years or being an executive of Koh Samui Tourism Office/Executive of Koh Samui Local Office/Executive of Koh Samui Tourism and Sports Office/Executive of Koh Samui Cultural Office or Executive of Koh Samui Tourism Association (2) has good knowledge and experience in tourism and local culture of Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province (3) and agrees to be interviewed to collect data. The researcher knows that all sample groups used in the research must obtain consent to provide information from the key informants. The number of qualitative key informants mentioned by Hennink and Kaiser (2021) found that the empirical data reached saturation within the in-depth interviews (9–17 people) or focus group discussions (4–8 people), especially those with a relatively homogeneous study population according to the specified objectives. In this research, the researcher determined the size of the key informants to be 17 people, using the Purposive Sampling method.

## Research Instrument

*Quantitative Research.* In collecting tourist data on tourism management to support digital nomad tourists on Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province, the research instrument is a questionnaire divided into 5 parts: Part 1: Personal information of tourists is a closed-ended question for selecting answers. Part 2: Digital nomad tourism behavior

on Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province. Part 3: Satisfaction with the marketing mix of Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province. 4. Factors affecting the decision to choose Koh Samui as a tourist destination for digital nomad tourists. 5. Tourism management to support digital nomad tourists on Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province. 5. Other suggestions are open-ended questions for respondents to describe.

*Qualitative Research:* In-depth Interviews and Focus Group Discussion Topics for Collecting Data on Tourism Management to Support Digital Nomad Tourists on Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province. Relevant groups were interviewed using a semi-structured interview form.

### Instrument Quality Validation

*Quantitative Research Instrument Check Content Validity:* The questionnaire was examined for accuracy, comprehensiveness and appropriateness. The quality of the research instrument was checked by finding the IOC (Index of Congruence) value from the evaluation of 5 experts. This was a quantitative data analysis using the index of consistency between the questions and the objectives, which was 0.88, in a 5-level rating scale under the consistency of the questions and the objectives. Each question must have an IOC value of not less than 0.5 (Rovinelli and Hambleton, 1977). It was found that all variables had an alpha coefficient between 0.80-0.91, which is greater than 0.70 (Vanichbuncha, 2014). Therefore, it can be concluded that the research instrument is reliable and can be used to collect data with the sample group. The quality of reliability was checked by examining the statistical values. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was analyzed from a non-real sample of 30 people. The reliability value was obtained. (Reliability) is equal to 0.94, which is considered to have a high reliability value.

*Qualitative Research Instrument Examination:* The researcher used the in-depth interview guideline for experts to examine the comprehensiveness and accuracy of the content to be academically correct. Then, the in-depth interview guideline and the focus group discussion guideline (FGD) were revised according to the suggestions of experts who examined the research instruments. Then, it was tested with government officials and brought back to be improved before being used in the field. Triangulation was used, consisting of 1) Data Triangulation, 2) Theory Triangulation, and 3) Methodological Triangulation.

### Statistics used for Data Analysis

The researcher analyzed the data according to the hypotheses and objectives as follows:

*Quantitative Data Analysis*: General data analysis on the status of the respondents was performed using descriptive statistics. Data was presented by finding the frequency and percentage. Tourist behavior analysis was performed by finding the mean and standard deviation (SD). The analysis was performed using statistical values. And the hypothesis was tested by multiple regression analysis.

*Qualitative Data Analysis:* The researcher analyzed data from the descriptive analysis form and conducted content analysis, which organized the data according to the main issues specified in the interview. The data obtained will be organized into categories to find the relationship between them. Management of tourist attractions to support digital nomad tourists (Digital NOMADs), Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province In this research, quantitative and qualitative data were obtained, which had to be synthesized from both parts to create a guideline for tourist attraction management to support digital nomad tourists (Digital NOMADs), Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province.


## RESULTS

### Section 1: Personal Data of the Respondents

The results of the general data analysis of the sample group found that the majority of the sample group were female, 55.5 percent, aged 31 to 40 years, 48.5 percent, had a bachelor's degree, 61.2 percent, were married, 67.5 percent, and worked as employees of private companies, 34.2 percent, and had an income of 1-3 million baht per year, 77.8 percent.

### Section 2: Analysis of Data on Tourism Behavior

**Table 1** Data on the behavior of digital nomads tourists, Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province

| Content | *M* | S.D. | Ranking |
|---|---|---|---|
| Overview of tourism stimuli | 3.97 | .319 | High |
| Overview of factors related to tourism perspectives | 3.98 | .338 | High |
| Overview of social factors | 4.02 | .513 | High |
| Overview of tourism service characteristics | 4.05 | .380 | High |
| Overview of tourism behavior | 4.01 | .388 | High |

*Remark: M= ค่าเฉลี่ย S.D = Standard Deviation*

From Table 1, it was found that the results of the overall analysis of the sample group's tourism behavior were at a high level (M = 4.01, S.D. = 388). When considering each aspect, it was found that the factors of tourism stimuli were at a high level (M = 3.97, S.D. = 319), the factors related to tourism perspectives were at a high level (M = 3.98, S.D. = .338), the social factors were at a high level (M = 4.02, S.D. = .513), and the factors of tourism service characteristics were at a high level (M = 4.05, S.D. = .380).

**Section 3 Satisfaction with Marketing Mix Factors of Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province to Support Digital NOMAD Tourism**

**Table 2** Data on satisfaction with marketing mix factors of developing Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province into a tourist destination for Digital NOMADs

| Content | *M* | S.D. | Ranking |
|---|---|---|---|
| Product overview, essential for deciding on a destination | 4.30 | .340 | High |
| Price overview | 4.09 | .298 | High |
| Distribution channel overview for digital nomad tourists | 4.11 | .380 | High |
| Promotional overview for digital nomad tourists | 4.08 | .342 | High |
| Overview of the right personnel for tourist services | 4.11 | .267 | High |
| Overview of tourist management processes | 4.11 | .339 | High |
| Overview of physical evidence | 4.16 | .347 | High |
| **Overview of marketing mix** | **4.10** | **.429** | **High** |

From Table 2, the results of the data analysis on satisfaction of the marketing mix of the development of Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province, to be a tourist attraction for digital nomads, overall, were found to be at a high level (M = 4.10, S.D. = .429). When considering each aspect, it was found that the product aspect, which is necessary for deciding to choose a tourist attraction, was at a high level (M = 4.30, S.D. = .340), the price aspect was at a high level (M = 4.09, S.D. = .298), the distribution channels for digital nomad tourists were at a high level (M = 4.11, S.D. = .380), and the sales promotion aspect for digital nomad tourists was at a high level (M = 4.11, S.D. = .380). Nomads are at a high level (M = 4.08, S.D. = .342). Personnel characteristics that are suitable for tourist services are at a high level (M = 4.11, S.D. = .340). Tourist attraction management processes are at a high level (M = 4.11, S.D. = .339). Physical evidence is at a high level (M = 4.16, S.D. = .347).

Section 4 Factors affecting the selection of Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province to support Digital Nomad tourism Digital NOMADs

**Table 3** Factors affecting the selection of Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province to support Digital Nomad tourism Digital NOMADs

| Content | *M* | S.D. | Ranking |
|---|---|---|---|
| Attraction | 4.28 | .402 | High |
| Accessibility of attractions | 4.09 | .583 | High |
| Facilities | 4.31 | .534 | High |
| Community participation | 3.98 | .338 | High |
| Marketing | 4.09 | .583 | High |
| **Overview of factors affecting the choice of attractions** | **4.15** | **.488** | **High** |

From Table 3, it was found that the overall analysis of the factors affecting the selection of Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province to support Digital NOMADs tourism of the sample group was at a high level (M = 4.15, S.D. = .488). When considering each aspect, it was found that the factor of tourist attractions was at a high level (M = 4.28 S.D. = .402), the factor of access to tourist attractions was at a high level (M = 4.09, S.D. = .583), the factor of facilities was at a high level (M = 4.31, S.D. = .534), the factor of community participation was at a high level (M = 3.98, S.D. = .338), and the factor of marketing was at a high level (M = 4.09, S.D. = .583).

**Qualitative Data**

Data on the development status of Koh Samui tourist attractions, Surat Thani Province for Digital Nomad tourists

Current conditions of Koh Samui tourist attractions, Surat Thani Province For tourists, it is one of the interesting destinations for this group of tourists because it has sufficiently developed infrastructure, natural beauty, and an atmosphere suitable for working and relaxing in the long term. The current conditions of tourist attractions for Digital NOMADs on Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province, still have many issues that need to be developed and improved in order to support the growth of this group of tourists appropriately and sustainably. The main problems can be explained as follows:

1. Problems with internet connectivity in some areas. Although the main tourist areas of Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province, such as Chaweng or Lamai, have good internet connectivity, in some remote or rural areas, the internet signal is not comprehensive or has insufficient speed. This is a problem for Digital NOMADs who rely mainly on the internet for work, making it difficult for this group of tourists to choose accommodation in areas far from the main community.

2. Limited transportation and public transportation systems. Public transportation systems on Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province are not comprehensive and do not have many options, causing Digital NOMADs who do not have private cars or do not want to rent a car to face difficulties in traveling between points on the island. Digital NOMADs must mainly rely on rental cars or taxi services, which may increase costs and be inconvenient for long-term travel.

3. Waste and pollution management on Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province There are problems with overflowing waste and insufficient waste management, especially plastic waste from both tourists and tourism businesses, which directly impacts the environment, both on land and at sea. The resulting pollution destroys the ecosystem and the beauty of nature, which is the main selling point of Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province, and is a problem that many Digital NOMADs are concerned about.

4. High-priced accommodation and lack of options for long-term stays Accommodation on Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province, especially in the main tourist areas, is quite expensive and sometimes lacks suitable options for Digital NOMADs who want to stay long-term on a limited budget. Digital NOMADs with limited budgets may want to find accommodation that is not too expensive and has complete facilities. Current options may not meet all of this tourist group's needs.

5. Insufficient sustainable development and nature conservation Despite the campaign for eco-tourism on Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province, there are still limitations in natural resource conservation and sustainable development, such as the unsystematic management of wastewater from businesses and hotels, as well as the unnecessary use of natural resources. Unsustainable tourism may cause Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province to lose its naturalness and original charm, which may cause Digital NOMADs who care about the environment to choose other destinations with better management.

6. Lack of support from the government and clear policies The promotion of Digital NOMADs has not received tangible support from the government. Although Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province has high potential to accommodate this tourist group, the lack of clear policies on promoting digital tourism and supporting telework is still a problem, making Koh Samui Surat Thani Province has failed to develop itself to its full potential as a leading destination for Digital NOMADs.

7. Conflicts between tourism and local communities Commercial tourism on Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province, has sometimes created conflicts with local communities, particularly in terms of natural resource use, tourism business expansion, and cultural impacts. Lack of local community participation in tourism development can lead to unsustainability, and Digital NOMADs may not feel connected to the community or want to participate in local culture.

Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province, has high potential to become a destination for Digital NOMADs, but issues of infrastructure, environmental management, availability of affordable accommodation, and policies to promote niche tourism remain major obstacles to developing sustainable tourist attractions for this group of tourists that can support long-term growth.

## Data on the Management of Tourist Attractions on Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province to Accommodate Digital Nomad Tourists

Key informants provided their opinions on the management of tourist attractions on Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province to accommodate digital nomad tourists in the form of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The researchers analyzed the data as follows: Interviews with tourism operators and government agencies and data analysis on the management of tourist attractions on Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province to accommodate digital nomad tourists were a collection of diverse perspectives from sectors that play an important role in the development of tourism in this group. Data from tourist questionnaires were used to create interview forms and focus group questions, which can be explained as follows:

1. Infrastructure and facilities Hotel and resort operators and tourism establishments on Koh Samui emphasize that digital nomad tourists are looking for infrastructure that supports online work, such as high-speed internet and modern workspaces. Many have invested in developing co-working spaces and creating long-term accommodation packages to specifically meet the needs of digital nomad tourists. Operators are aware of the needs of digital nomad tourists in having a complete workspace. Improving accommodation to be suitable for work and relaxation in balance is essential. Quality infrastructure will be a key strength in attracting this group of tourists. Internet connectivity and Co-Working Spaces Koh

Samui, Surat Thani Province has high-speed internet service covering the main areas of the island, as well as a variety of co-working spaces and cafes with Wi-Fi available. Most are located in popular areas such as Chaweng, Lamai and Mae Nam, which are hotspots for Digital Nomads. Good internet connectivity and co-working spaces make Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province popular with Digital Nomads who want to work online from anywhere. 2. Accommodation and lifestyle Most operators are trying to adapt by offering long-term accommodation packages with flexible prices depending on the season and special promotions to attract Digital Nomads to stay longer. They offer additional amenities such as laundry services, food delivery or even health services. Adjusting prices to suit the long-term stay and adding additional services is a way to create a competitive advantage. Operators who can flexibly respond to the specific needs of Digital Nomads will be able to generate stable income in the long run. Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province has a variety of accommodation types to meet the needs of tourists. From luxury resorts to budget accommodations, Digital NOMADs can choose long-term stays to suit their budget. Some accommodations even include productivity facilities such as meeting rooms and high-quality Wi-Fi. With a range of accommodation options to suit every budget, Digital NOMADs can choose a stay that suits their needs and lifestyle.

2. Tourism and leisure activities Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province, has a variety of natural attractions and activities, such as trekking, waterfalls, snorkeling, and quiet beaches. In addition, there are cultural activities such as visiting Thai temples and learning to cook Thai food, which attract the attention of Digital Nomads who want to work and relax at the same time. The variety of activities available on the island allows Digital Nomads to balance work and relaxation appropriately.

3. Travel and transportation Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province has a convenient transportation infrastructure, with rental cars, motorcycles, and taxis widely available. However, public transportation may be limited in some areas. Digital NOMADs who want mobility often rent motorcycles or cars for personal use. The public transportation system should be developed to be more comprehensive to accommodate tourists who do not want to rent private cars.

4. Environmental conservation and sustainable development Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province, faces problems in waste management and pollution caused by tourism and infrastructure development. Some areas have started to promote sustainable tourism, such as waste management and promoting the use of environmentally friendly materials. However, there is still a need to develop a more efficient waste management and nature conservation system, raise awareness of eco-tourism, and promote environmentally friendly activities, such as reducing the use of single-use plastics. And support for environmentally conscious businesses

5. Local communities and responsible tourism Local communities on Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province, are involved in developing tourist attractions and businesses related to providing services to digital nomads. However, the tension between tourism development and preserving traditional ways of life remains an issue that needs to be managed to achieve sustainability. Local communities should be encouraged to play a role in organizing tourism activities that are consistent with their way of life and culture to achieve long-term sustainability.

6. Supportive policies and infrastructure Local authorities and tourism emphasize the development of infrastructure and the promotion of sustainable tourism. Some government agencies have begun to develop high-speed public internet systems in Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province, to support remote work by digital nomads, and have pushed for improvements to the long-term visa application system to facilitate their stay. Having policies to promote local and central government, such as improving the visa system and supporting infrastructure, such as high-speed internet, are important factors in attracting digital nomads. Agencies that support appropriate infrastructure will help promote the local economy and sustainable tourism.

7. Promoting long-term tourism Government agencies have also mentioned the promotion of sustainable tourism, such as developing eco-tourism sites and creating activities to connect tourists with local communities. This is an important part of attracting Digital NOMADs to stay longer. Creating travel experiences that combine local culture and environmentally friendly activities will attract Digital NOMADs who are looking for a quality life while working. Creating sustainability in tourism is an important selling point.

Summary of the analysis of the development of accommodation and infrastructure for Digital NOMADs requires cooperation between entrepreneurs and government agencies. Entrepreneurs should improve accommodation and services to meet the needs of Digital NOMADs, especially in terms of infrastructure, high-speed internet, and work space. Government agencies should support policies such as issuing long-term visas and developing public infrastructure. Promoting sustainable tourism is also a factor that helps attract this group of tourists to stay longer.

**Hypothesis Testing**

Factors Affecting the Decision to Choose Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province as a Tourist Destination for Digital Nomads

**Table 4** Results of multiple regression analysis between tourism behavior and the decision to choose Samui Island, Surat Thani Province as a tourist destination for Digital NOMADs

| Tourism behavior | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | β | Std. Error | Beta | t | Sig |
| Constant | 4.532 | .316 | | 14.334 | .000 |
| X11 Tourism stimuli | .324 | .133 | .363 | 5.241 | .000* |
| X12 Factors related to tourism perspectives | .109 | .410 | .118 | 3.223 | .02* |
| X13 Social factors | .605 | .321 | .672 | 4.452 | .03* |
| X14 Characteristics of tourism services | .415 | .193 | .124 | 6.595 | .000* |
| R²=.613, Adjusted R²=.589 | F=23.29 | Sig.=.001* | | | |

*Significant level of .05*

From Table 4.4, the results of the multiple regression analysis between tourism behavior and decision making to choose Samui Island, Surat Thani Province as a tourist attraction for Digital NOMADs found that tourism behavior was related to decision making to choose Samui Island, Surat Thani Province as a tourist attraction for Digital NOMADs by 61.3 percent ($R^2$= .613, P=.001). Tourism behavior consisted of tourism stimuli. (β = .324, p=.000) Factors related to tourism perspectives (β = .109, p=.02) Social factors (β = .605, p=.03) and, Characteristics of tourism services (β= .415, p=.000) with a relationship at a statistical significance level of 0.05 (p=.001).

**Table 5** Results of multiple regression analysis between the marketing mix of developing Samui Island, Surat Thani Province as a tourist attraction for Digital NOMADs and the decision to select Samui Island, Surat Thani Province as a tourist attraction for Digital NOMADs.

| Marketing Mix | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | β | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| Constant | 13.491 | .351 | | 9.959 | .000* |
| X21 Products needed for deciding on tourist attractions | .106 | .361 | .159 | 3.274 | .04* |
| X22 Price | .483 | .482 | .771 | 4.011 | .013* |
| X23 Distribution channels | .372 | .593 | .425 | 7.635 | .000* |
| X24 Sales promotion | .288 | .599 | .353 | 4.471 | .01* |
| X25 Personnel characteristics | .165 | .446 | .261 | 6.368 | .013* |
| X26 Tourist attraction management process | .224 | .408 | .328 | 3.549 | .04* |
| X27 Physical evidence | .288 | .457 | .312 | 6.355 | .000* |
| R²=.325, Adjusted R²=.286 | F=6.62 | Sig.=.005* | | | |

*Significant level of .05*

From Table 5, the results of the multiple regression analysis between the marketing mix of developing Samui Island into a tourist attraction for Digital NOMADs and the decision to choose Samui Island, Surat Thani Province as a tourist attraction for Digital NOMADs found that the marketing mix of developing Samui Island, Surat Thani Province as a tourist attraction for Digital NOMADs was related to the decision to choose Samui Island, Surat Thani Province as a tourist attraction for Digital NOMADs by 32.5 percent ($R^2$ = .325, P = .005). The marketing mix of developing Samui Island, Surat Thani Province as a tourist attraction for Digital NOMADs consisted of Products needed for deciding on tourist attractions variable (β=.106, p=.04) Pricing variable (β=.483, p=.013) Sales promotion for digital Nomad variable (β=.372, p=.000) Distribution channel variable for Digital Nomad (β=.288, p=.01) Personnel characteristics variable for Digital Nomad (β= .165, p=.013) Tourist attraction management

process variable for Digital Nomad (β=.224, p=.04) and Physical evidence variable (β=.288, p=.000) with a relationship at a statistical significance level of 0.05 (p=.001).

## DISCUSSION

The results of the study found that tourism behavior is highly related to the decision to choose Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province as a tourist destination for Digital NOMADs. The sub-factors include tourism stimuli, factors related to tourism perspectives, social factors, and characteristics of tourism services. This is consistent with the research of Polwasit Lhakard (2022) studying Destination City for Digital Nomad's in Thailand: A Case Study of Digital Nomad Community in Chiang Mai. This research studies the factors that make Chiang Mai a popular destination for digital nomads using the research results. The research results indicate three main factors that support the decision to choose Chiang Mai: natural and cultural capital, access to work and communication infrastructure, and information exchange networks in the digital nomad community. In line with the research of Müller (2016), this research analyzes the relationship between digital nomads and location and movement. It was found that the choice of a digital nomad destination depends on many factors, such as internet access, convenience of travel, and reasonable cost of living.

This study also found that the marketing mix of developing Koh Samui as a tourist destination for Digital NOMADs has a moderate relationship with the decision to choose Koh Samui as a tourist destination for Digital NOMADs. It consists of product variables necessary for deciding to choose a tourist destination, product variables, distribution channels for Digital NOMADs, sales promotion variables for Digital NOMADs, personnel characteristics suitable for tourist services, tourist management process variables, and physical evidence variables. This is consistent with the research of Jiwasiddi, Schlagwein, Cahalane, Cecez-Kecmanovic, Leong, & Ractham, (2024) studying Digital nomadism as a new part of the visitor economy: The case of the "digital nomad capital" Chiang Mai, Thailand. This research explores the impact of Digital Nomad tourists on the tourism industry in Thailand, especially Koh Samui. The results of the research found that NOMAD tourists play an important role in stimulating the local economy. However, there is a demand for specific services and easily accessible technologies, including the work of Nikolaidou and Kostopoulou (2025) on "Digital Nomads and Destination Attractiveness Criteria: The Case of Thessaloniki, Greece". This research examines the main factors that influence digital nomads' destination choice: Security, Work, Sociability and Leisure.

In addition, in the management of tourist attractions in Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province to support Digital NOMAD tourists, from quantitative research that studied questionnaires and used data from quantitative research to conduct interviews and focus group discussions, the following guidelines were obtained:

1. Infrastructure and facilities Having high-speed internet and modern working spaces Many places have invested in developing co-working spaces and creating long-term accommodation packages to meet the needs of Digital NOMAD tourists.

2. Accommodation and lifestyle Entrepreneurs have adjusted long-term packages with flexible prices depending on the season and have special promotions to attract Digital NOMAD tourists to stay longer by offering additional facilities such as laundry services, food delivery, a variety of accommodation options that are in line with the budget, allowing Digital NOMAD tourists to choose a vacation according to their needs and lifestyle.

3. Tourism and relaxation activities Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province has a variety of natural attractions and activities, such as hiking, waterfalls, snorkeling, and quiet beaches. In addition, there are cultural activities. Enable Digital NOMADs to balance work and leisure appropriately

4. Travel and Transportation Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province has a convenient transportation structure, with rental cars, motorcycles, and taxis widely available. However, public transportation may be limited in some areas. Digital NOMADs who need mobility often rent motorcycles or cars for personal use.

5. Environmental conservation and sustainable development Developing more efficient waste management and nature conservation systems, raising awareness of eco-tourism, and promoting environmentally friendly activities.

6. Local communities and responsible tourism Encourage participation in the development of tourist attractions and businesses related to providing services to Digital NOMADs by encouraging local communities to play a role in organizing tourism activities that are consistent with their way of life and culture, in order to create long-term sustainability.

7. Supportive policies and infrastructure Local authorities and tourism emphasize the development of infrastructure and the promotion of sustainable tourism. Some government agencies have started developing high-speed public internet systems in Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province, to support remote

work by Digital NOMADs, and have also pushed for improvements to the long-term visa application system to facilitate this group's stay.

8. Promoting long-term tourism Government agencies have also mentioned promoting sustainable tourism, such as developing eco-tourism sites and creating activities to connect tourists with local communities, which are important parts of creating interest for digital nomads. This is consistent with the research of Thitaree Deerang (2022) studying strategies to attract digital nomads to Thailand. This research explores strategies to improve and develop Thailand as a suitable destination to upgrade the quality of infrastructure facilities to increase convenience and is consistent with the research of Angtyasti Jiwasiddi, Daniel Schlagwein, and Carmen Leong (2022) on "Assessing the Impacts of Digital Nomadism on Local Communities: The Case of Chiang Mai, Thailand", which found that digital tourists spend money on accommodation, coworking spaces, technology devices, food and beverages, which has a positive impact on local businesses such as restaurants, hostels, and cafes. Local businesses benefit from having digital nomads. Digital nomads have activities with communities to exchange knowledge and skills with local communities. The presence of digital tourists results in the development of technological infrastructure, such as high-speed internet and quality co-working spaces.

**New Knowledge**



GUIDELINES FOR TOURISM MANAGEMENT IN KOH SAMUI, SURAT THANI PROVINCE TO SUPPORT DIGITAL NOMAD TOURISTS

1. Management of attractions to support digital nomads. Promoting a variety of tourism activities, both natural attractions and community attractions. In this regard, travel must be able to balance work and leisure appropriately.
2. Management of access to support digital nomads. Traveling to tourist attractions must be convenient, private and safe. There should be a convenient transportation structure that provides private facilities for tourists, such as rental cars and motorcycles, to facilitate tourists to adjust their work and travel styles appropriately.
3. Management of facilities to support digital nomads include:
    a. Infrastructure, internet connectivity and Co-Working Spaces that are suitable for convenient, safe work and comprehensive service.
    b. Accommodation and lifestyle facilities for work, such as meeting rooms and high-quality Wi-Fi, laundry services, food delivery, or even health services. Having a variety of accommodation options that are in line with the budget allows digital nomads to choose their accommodations according to their needs and lifestyle.
4. Marketing to support digital nomads. Promoting long-term tourism. Government agencies and the private sector are promoting tourism together with an emphasis on sustainability, such as developing eco-tourism sites. Creating activities to connect tourists with local communities is an important part of attracting Digital NOMADs to stay longer. Creating travel experiences that combine local culture and environmentally friendly activities will attract Digital NOMADs who are looking for a quality life while working. Creating sustainability in tourism is an important selling point.
5. In terms of management of local community participation to support Digital NOMADs, local communities on Koh Samui, Surat Thani Province, have participated in the development of tourist attractions and businesses related to providing services to Digital NOMADs. However, the tension between tourism development and preserving traditional ways of life remains an issue that needs to be

managed to achieve sustainability. Local communities should be encouraged to play a role in organizing tourism activities that are consistent with their way of life and culture to achieve long-term sustainability.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Policy Recommendation

1. Creating a policy to support Digital NOMAD tourism: The government should set specific policies to promote tourism in the Digital NOMAD group by establishing appropriate tourism projects or packages and supporting online marketing to effectively reach the target group.
2. Infrastructure development: Investment in infrastructure, such as expanding public transportation and developing high-speed internet networks, should be made to support the convenience of working and traveling for Digital NOMAD tourists.
3. Environmental conservation: There must be laws and measures to conserve nature and the environment to maintain the beauty of Koh Samui and create shared responsibility between tourists and local communities.

### Practical Recommendations

1. Creating an online platform for work: Create a platform that allows Digital NOMAD tourists to connect with accommodation and co-working spaces conveniently, such as booking long-term accommodation or finding suitable workplaces.
2. Organizing appropriate activities and programs: Activities and programs should be developed that meet the lifestyle of Digital NOMADs, such as organizing seminars on remote working, teaching new skills, or organizing activities to connect tourists with local communities.
3. Creating a network of tourism services: Developing collaboration between local tourism entrepreneurs, such as accommodation, restaurants, cafes, and co-working spaces. To create a memorable and convenient experience for Digital NOMAD tourists

### Academic Recommendations

1. Further research and study: Further research should be conducted on the tourism behavior and needs of Digital NOMAD tourists to gain insights that will help develop appropriate marketing and service strategies.
2. Training and skills development: Support training for tourism business operators and local communities to develop skills in serving Digital NOMAD tourists and creating satisfactory experiences.
3. Conferences and knowledge exchange forums: Conferences or seminars should be organized to exchange ideas and approaches to developing Koh Samui into a tourist destination that meets the needs of Digital NOMAD tourists.

Developing Koh Samui into a tourist destination for Digital NOMAD tourists requires consideration of multiple dimensions, including policies, infrastructure, services and activities that meet the needs of this group. Each recommendation will help develop effectively and attract Digital NOMAD tourists to choose Koh Samui as an attractive and sustainable destination in the long term.

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