

Cycling Tourism Situation in Songkhla Special Economic Zone

สถานการณ์การท่องเที่ยวโดยจักรยาน ในเขตเศรษฐกิจพิเศษสงขลา

Received:	October	25, 2018
Revised:	February	15, 2019
Accepted:	March	1, 2019

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Abstract

This research article studies the cycling tourism situation in the Songkhla Special Economic Zone. Data were collected from relevant documents and observations, including interviews from various sectors comprising 29 respondents from local administrative organizations, related government authorities, tourism entrepreneurs, and bicycle clubs. These qualitative data were then using narrative analysis. The study found that local administrative organizations and government authorities in the study area had set plans related to cycling tourism; such as, providing bike lanes in the main tourist attraction areas, and improving the landscape, attractions and facilities for cycling tourists. Items of interest for cycling tourists in this Zone consisted of natural and cultural attractions that cyclists could access. Facilities found there were various forms of accommodation, with prices being not too high. Although there were many bicycle parking areas, there is still a lack of specific facilities for cycling tourists; such as, bicycle maintenance tools, cleaning places, and information services concerning cycling tourism. Food shops, stores, bike shops, and bike repair shops could be found, but they were mostly situated in the town itself or in the main tourist attraction area, but not in the cycling routes area. Moreover, there were no bike-lane signs or friendly route signs showing information concerning bicycle paths, tourism programs, activities or bike route maps. According to this cycling tourism situation above, a further in-depth study is required to understand the requirements of the cycling tourists in the area to improve cycling tourism developments appropriate to the situation and the needs of these tourists.

Keywords: 1.Situation 2.Cycling Tourism 3.Songkhla Special Economic Zone

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความวิจัยชิ้นนี้ ศึกษาสถานการณ์การท่องเที่ยวโดยจักรยานในเขตเศรษฐกิจพิเศษสงขลา โดยเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลจากการศึกษาเอกสาร การสังเกตการณ์ประกอบการสัมภาษณ์ภาคส่วนต่างๆ ที่เกี่ยวข้อง จำนวน 29 คน ได้แก่ องค์กรปกครองส่วนท้องถิ่น หน่วยงานภาครัฐ ผู้ประกอบการท่องเที่ยว และชมรมจักรยาน และทำการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพด้วยการบรรยายเชิงพรรณนา ผลการศึกษา พบว่า องค์กรปกครองส่วนท้องถิ่น และหน่วยงานภาครัฐภายในพื้นที่ได้กำหนดแผนการพัฒนาที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการท่องเที่ยวโดยจักรยาน ได้แก่ การจัดทำทางจักรยานในบริเวณแหล่งท่องเที่ยวหลัก การปรับปรุงภูมิทัศน์ สิ่งดึงดูดใจ และสิ่งอำนวยความสะดวกสำหรับนักท่องเที่ยวจักรยาน โดยสิ่งดึงดูดใจสำหรับนักท่องเที่ยวจักรยานในพื้นที่ที่มีทั้งแหล่งท่องเที่ยวทางธรรมชาติและวัฒนธรรม ที่นักท่องเที่ยวสามารถปั่นจักรยานเข้าไปยังแหล่งท่องเที่ยวดังกล่าวได้ และสำหรับสิ่งอำนวยความสะดวก พบว่า ด้านที่พักในพื้นที่มีหลากหลายรูปแบบและราคาไม่สูงเกินไป ส่วนใหญ่ภายในที่พักมีที่จอดรถจักรยาน แต่ยังขาดสิ่งอำนวยความสะดวกสำหรับนักท่องเที่ยวจักรยานโดยเฉพาะ เช่น เครื่องมือซ่อมบำรุงจักรยาน สถานที่ทำความสะอาดจักรยาน และการบริการด้านข้อมูลข่าวสารเกี่ยวกับการท่องเที่ยวโดยจักรยาน เป็นต้น สำหรับด้านร้านอาหารและร้านค้า ร้านขายและซ่อมจักรยาน พบว่า ส่วนใหญ่อยู่ในตัวเมืองหรือบริเวณแหล่งท่องเที่ยวหลัก แต่ในบริเวณเส้นทางจักรยานยังมีน้อย และด้านป้ายสัญลักษณ์ พบว่าในพื้นที่ยังไม่มีป้ายสัญลักษณ์ทางจักรยาน และป้ายสัญลักษณ์ที่แสดงถึงความเป็นมิตรของเส้นทางที่แสดงข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับเส้นทางจักรยาน โปรแกรมการท่องเที่ยว กิจกรรมในพื้นที่ และแผนที่ของเส้นทางจักรยาน เป็นต้น ซึ่งจากข้อค้นพบเกี่ยวกับสถานการณ์การท่องเที่ยวโดยจักรยานทางด้านพื้นที่ดังกล่าว แสดงถึงความจำเป็นในการศึกษาเพิ่มเติมเรื่องความต้องการของนักท่องเที่ยวจักรยานในพื้นที่ เพื่อนำไปสู่การกำหนดแนวทางการพัฒนาการท่องเที่ยวโดยจักรยานที่สอดคล้องกับสถานการณ์และความต้องการของนักท่องเที่ยวจักรยานในพื้นที่ต่อไป

คำสำคัญ : สถานการณ์ การท่องเที่ยวโดยจักรยาน เขตเศรษฐกิจพิเศษสงขลา

Introduction

Cycling tourism can be defined as “recreational visits, either overnight or day visits away from home, which involve leisure cycling as a fundamental and significant part of the visit” (Sustrans, 1999; 1). Cycling tourism is an environmentally-friendly tourism where tourists not only receive experiences, but also are able to reduce the impact of tourism (Chang and Chang, 2003; 1,681). These reductions include:

- 1) The reduction of greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere. Cycling tourists usually travel more by train than car or airplane, and choose to stay at camps, bungalows, homes or hostels, thus releasing a rather low quantity of CO₂ (Piket et al., 2013; 118).
- 2) A reduction in energy consumption, because bicycles are the ultimate clean-energy vehicle with zero emissions and only the small amount of materials required for their construction (Bicycle New South Wales, 2016).

3) A reduction in noise and air pollution; as well as, traffic density, because the bicycle is small in size, uses little space, makes no sound, and does not release CO₂ (Sustrans, 1999; 3).

4) A reduction in natural resources destruction.

A bike also helps preserve natural resources, because the development of cycling tourism usually re-uses existing resources; such as canal towpaths, unused railways or sharing the road on (high) ways where traffic levels are generally low. In addition, there is no focus on building new or large constructions (Piket et al., 2013; 118); hence, cycling tourism has very little impact on natural resources.

The global growth of cycling tourism has tended to become higher, especially in those European countries that are the most popular destinations for cycling tourists. There are an estimated 2.3 billion cycle tourism trips in Europe every year with a value in excess of 44 billion Euros (Bodor et al., 2016; 4) This is because riding bicycles in these countries is safe; there is the development of bike lanes that are clearly separated from other vehicle, the development of facilities for bicycle riding and beautiful landscapes; as well as, an optimum climate for year-round bicycle riding (Sustrans, 1999; 13). All the above-mentioned reasons make many countries in Europe the main destinations for cycling tourists, both local and internationally; such as, Germany, the Netherlands, and Austria. Cycling tourists also love to travel to other continents; some countries such as, the United States of America (USA) have developed infrastructures and facilities for cycling tourists. The USA has now become an important destination for cycling tourists and offers an economic development potential for small businesses in towns throughout the states; such as, Montana, where bicycle tourists spend \$75 and \$102 per person per day for local accommodation and facilities (Nickerson et al., 2014; 4). In addition, in the northern Outer Banks coastal area of North Carolina, there are more than 60 million cycling tourists per year, with approximately 49.6 billion dollars of cycling tourist expenses per year producing as high as 1.1 million jobs and donating approximately 17.7 million dollars per year from taxes to the government, states and locally (Meletiou et al, 2005; 18).

In Thailand, the growth tendency of the cycling tourism situation has been increasing. In 2017, it was found that the income from cycling tourism was about 1,500 million baht, which was about 10% per year of an increasing rate. The number of cycling tourists from foreign countries in Thailand was about 30,000 persons per year, which was about 10% per year and the rate is still increasing. The cycling tourists in Thailand were from European

countries, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Britain; Asian countries, China, South Korea, and Japan; neighboring countries, Malaysia and Singapore, and locally, 400,000 Thai (Motortrivia, 2018). This was because the Thai Government set policies to promote bicycle riding by improving bike lanes in Bangkok and other provinces nationwide, including studying and planning developments of the transportation system that linked with cycling travel. In addition, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has arranged cycling tourism routes in Bangkok and nearby provinces under the theme of “fun cycling and admire the Thai way with TAT” (Tourism Authority of Thailand, n.d.). TAT has started to expand the routes to 12 secondary cities; such as, Lampang, Phetchabun, Nan, Buri Ram, Loei, Samut Songkram, Ratchaburi, Trad, Chanthaburi, Trang, Chumporn, and the Nakhon Si Thammarat Provinces, by using the charisma or the identities of each province to arrange the intended routes. Tourists are then able to feel the lure or identity of each province through aspects of their experiences of joining in activities and learning the lifestyles of the people in the communities (Tourism Authority of Thailand, n.d.). Additionally, there are even more arrangements for cycling tourism routes in private sectors and local communities in many other provinces in Thailand.

Similarly, the Songkhla Special Economic Zone (see Figure 1) comprises four Sub-Districts in the Sadao District, Songkhla Province, namely Sadao (Yellow colour), Samnak Kham (Purple colour), Samnak Tao (Green colour) and Padang Besar (Light red colour) Sub-Districts, with a total area of 552.3 square kilometers bordering the Kedah and Perlis States, in Malaysia. This Songkhla Special Economic Zone mainly focuses on a development plan; such as, building large constructions and infrastructures or industrial estates that may produce negative impacts on the area, especially on the environment. Therefore, this article concentrates on the cycling tourism situation in the Songkhla Special Economic Zone plan relating to cycling tourism in general, the attractions and activity arrangements related to cycling tourism, and the facilities available for cycling tourists in this area.

Materials and Methods

1. Objectives

To study the cycling tourism situation in Songkhla Special Economic Zone (see Figure 1) on four main issues that received from the theories back up as follow.

- The plan related to cycling tourism; such as plans on bike lanes, tourist attraction, facilities, and experiences (Kaloyanov, 2016; 145).

- The attractions for cycling tourists; such as, natural (Simonsen et al., 1998; 70) and cultural (Beierle, 2011; 20) attractions.
- The activity arrangements related to cycling tourism; such as bicycle race and cycling activities for tourism (Faulks et al., 2007; 35).
- The available facilities for cycling tourists in this area; such as, accommodation/campsite, shop/restaurant, tourist service center, bicycle shop/repair, parking/bicycle storage (Beierle, 2011; 19), bike-lane signs, and information of bicycle routes, tourism programs, local activities, or bike route maps. (Simonsen et al., 1998; 71).

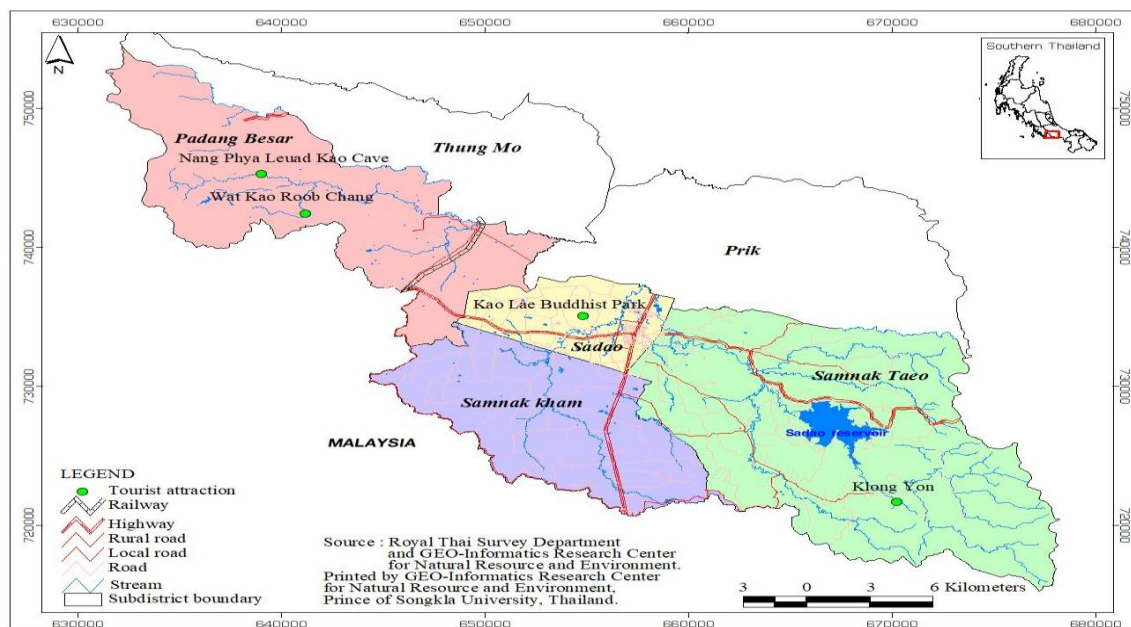


Figure 1 Four Sub-Districts of Songkhla Special Economic Zone: Study Area of this Research

2. Methodology

Data collected from the samples by using in-depth interviews from the relevant sectors with observations; as well as, reviews of the relevant documents. Table 1. shows 29 samples obtained by purposive sampling from representatives of sectors related to cycling tourism in the Songkhla Special Economic Zone. This concordant to what Suthiwarakorn (2016; 24 quote from Lincoln and Guba, 1985) mentioned that the qualified number of samples in qualitative research should be approximately 12-20 people, and the qualified number of appropriate samples should be 25 people (Suthiwarakorn, 2016; 24 quote from Douglas, 1985), as well as get along well with this research timing and budget. Finally, data from in-depth interviews, observations, and relevant documents were analyzed by narrative analysis.

Table 1 Representatives for In-Depth Interviews

Representatives		Area	Number of Interviewees
1) Chief Executives of local administrative organizations	Sadaocity Municipality	Sadao Sub-District	1
	Samnak Kham Sub-District Municipality	Samnak Kharm Sub-District	1
	Padang Bezar Municipality	Padang Bezar Sub-District	1
	Padang Sub-District Administrative Organization		1
	Samnak Taew Sub-District Administrative Organization	Samnak Taew Sub-District	1
2) Representatives of related government authorities	Songkhla Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports	Representatives of provincial level that covering all areas in 4 Sub-Districts	1
	Tourism Authority of Thailand (Songkhla-Phatthalung Provinces)		1
	Songkhla Provincial Land Transport Office		1
	Songkhla Provincial Rural Roads Office		1
3) Tourism entrepreneurs	Accommodations	Cover all areas in 4 Sub-Districts	4
	Restaurants		4
	Bicycle shops		4
	Bicycle repair shops		4
4) Presidents of bicycle clubs	Representative from Sadao Sub-District		1
	Representative from Samnak Kharm Sub-District		1
	Representative from Padang Bezar Sub-District		1
	Representative from Samnak Taew Sub-District		1
Total			29

Results

The study covered the cycling tourism situation in the Songkhla Special Economic Zone for the plan relating to cycling tourism, the attractions for cycling tourists, activity arrangements, and facilities for cycling tourists by using the literature reviewed, in-depth interviews, and observations from the relevant representatives from the four sectors comprising 29 interviewees from local administrative organizations, related government authorities, tourism entrepreneurs and bicycle clubs. The interview results are summarized as follows.

1) Plan for cycling tourism in the Songkhla Special Economic Zone

1.1) Plan for making bike-lanes in the main tourist attractions in the Songkhla Special Economic Zone

a. A plan for making a bike lane from the entrance and around the Khlong Sadao Dam (see Figure 2), Samnak Tao Sub-District, that area is 7.2 square kilometres, in two stages of new three-metre wide asphaltic-concrete-surface bike-lanes with a total distance of 750 metres. The newly-constructed bike-lanes link with the original bike-lane and make the total distance 5.5 kilometres. Also there is an additional bike-lane on Highway No. 4243, the main route before the entrance of the reservoir, and another bike-lane on the asphalt road at the entrance to the Khlong Sadao Dam. These projects have been the responsibility of the Khlong Sadao Dam Utility Strengthening Project of the Sadao District and Samnak Tao Sub-District Administrative Organizations with an operational period of five years during 2017 to 2022.



Figure 2 Khlong Sadao Dam

b. Plan for making a road and bike-lane around the Kao Lae, Sadao Sub-District where there are important tourist attractions; such as, the Kao Lae fog watching area (see Figure 3; Left), and the Kao Lae, Sadao Buddhist Park (see Figure 3; Right). This road and bike lane were the road and lane from the main road to the area around Kao Lae with a total distance of 8.5 kilometres. The budget for this construction has been supported by the

Department of Public Works and the Town and Planning of the Songkhla Province. The operation begun in 2018.



Figure 3 Fog watching area at Kao Lae (Left) and Buddhist Park at Kao Lae (Right)

c. Plan for making a 10-metres-wide road and bike-lane around the Thai-Malaysia Border Road from the Sadao Border Checkpoint, Samnak Kham Sub-District to the Padang Bezar Border Checkpoint, Padang Bezar Sub-District with a total distance of 30 kilometres (see Figure 4). The budget was supported by the Songkhla Administrative Organization and the Songkhla Provincial Rural Roads Office. The Road and bike-lanes of the first and the second stages were constructed over a distance of 600 metres, and the construction of the asphaltic concrete road for a distanced of 9.4 kilometres together with a landscape adjustment. The third and the fourth stages will be the construction of 20 kilometres of roads that are still awaiting the budget from the Central Government.



Figure 4 Bicycle lane at the Thai-Malaysia border road

1.2) Plan of landscape adjustment and creation of attractions and facilities for cycling tourists

a. The plan is for adjusting the landscape around the Khlong Sadao Dam to be plentiful and beautiful by planting perennial plants to strengthen the community's identity. Also, creating attractions for tourists; such as, an artificial beach or a small park with a length of 200 metres to be a resting place for tourists, an island in the middle of the Khlong Sadao Dam to be a tourist attraction, a dhamma retreat by building a dhamma building, for important religious worshipping images, and constructing a bridge or raft to link the land with the island

over the distance of 200 metres and creating the facilities for a bicycle service point, a parking lot, an OTOP (One Tambon/District, One Product) distribution point, a tourist service point and a restroom. Furthermore, there is also an area for cycling tourists who want to set-up a tent. This project has been the responsibility of the Sadao District and Samnak Tao Sub-District Administrative Organization with an operational period of five years from 2017 to 2022.

b. The plan is for adjusting the landscape around the border area in the Samnak Kham Sub-District by creating a resting point for cycling tourists around the 19th kilometer post that is the separation line between Thailand and Malaysia. In addition, there is a project to develop a bike-lane and scenic point, including a public recreational building and restroom for cycling tourists that is operated under the development budget of the Songkhla Special Economic Zone. However, this plan is still under planning by the Department of Public Works and Town and Country Planning, Songkhla Province; and is designed by an external consultant.

2) Attractions for cycling tourists

2.1) Natural tourist attractions

a. Khlong Sadao Dam (see Figure 2). A large reservoir and water source of the Khlong U-Tapao located in the Samnak Tao Sub-District with an area of 7.2 square kilometers and a capacity of 67.23 million cubic metres. There is a bike-lane construction project at the entrance and around the reservoir where cycling tourists are able to ride to admire the scenery around the reservoir, which is beautiful and shaded by the trees. In addition, there is also a landscape adjustment project around the reservoir to create a community identity. There is a facility and attraction construction project for cycling tourists. Tourists are able to ride bicycles from the main road to the reservoir along the road path for a total distance of 20 kilometres.

b. Khlong Yon (see Figure 5). A canal with clear water all-year-round and the shade of trees around the area located in Moo 6, Samnak Tao Sub-District. The Samnak Tao Sub-District Administrative Organization develops this canal to be a tourist attraction where tourists are able to relax or enjoy the water in this area. Additionally, for interested tourists, there are rafting activity arrangements held by the locals in the area. The rafting distance is about six kilometres and takes approximately one hour. Tourists are able to ride bicycles from the main road to Khlong Yon along the 20 kilometres road path where the traffic is very light, and both sides of the road are bordered by rubber plantations, fruit gardens and the houses of the locals in the area.



Figure 5 Klong Yon, Moo 6, SamnakTaeo Sub-District

c. Kao Lae (see Figure 3; Left). A natural tourist attraction rich in natural resources and beautiful scenery. The mountain peak called Hua Lan Peak was a fog view point that is beautiful in the mornings, especially during June to October. Moreover, the Sadaocity Municipality operates the construction of the Kao Lae Buddhist Park (see Figure 3; Right) where important Buddhist sacred items have been gathered. There are learning sources in this 0.4 square kilometres; such as, a botanical garden, observatory, planetarium, training centre, academic camp, tourist public relations and service building. There is also a resting place to create an attraction for cycling tourists to visit and stay in this area. Tourists are able to ride bicycles from the main road along the road path around Kao Lae, passing the Kao Lae Buddhist Park and the uphill ascent of Hua Lan Peak with a total distance of eight kilometres.

2.2) Cultural tourist attractions

a. Wat Kao Roob Chang (see Figure 6). A Chinese temple located at the foothill at Moo 6, Padang Bezar Sub-District. It is a beautiful, architectural outstanding with a marble pagoda imitating the Buddhakaya Pagoda in India. The temple had a large Buddha statue and gorgeous wall paintings concealed with dhamma doctrines. In addition, there is a place where tourists could practice dhamma and a large cave behind the temple where the entrance is decorated with a trunk-shaped stone. The cave holds a reclining-Buddha image including a Guanyinstatue where beautiful stalagmites and stalactites surround the place, creating a panorama of sacred items inside the cave. Many Malaysian and Singaporean tourists love to come to worship, especially Singaporeans, because this temple was constructed by Chinese monks who were Singaporeans and is located only 11 kilometres from the Padang Bezar Checkpoint. Tourists are able to ride bicycles from the main road along the path, a small asphalt road where traffic is very light, to the entrance.



Figure 6 Wat Kao Roob Chang, Moo 6, Padang Bezar Sub-District

b. Nang PhyaLeuad Kao Cave (see Figure 7). Located about four kilometres from Wat Kao Roob Chang at Moo 11, Padang Bezar Sub-District. This is a beautiful cave rich in natural resources, wildlife and plant habitats. There are gorgeous stalagmites, stalactites, and a stream that is an important natural water source. This cave has interesting historic stories relating to Nang Phya Leuad Kao. There was a Nang Phya Leuad Kao Mekkatham House of Priests inside the cave where there is a Buddha image, and it is also a place for practicing dhamma. Tourists are able to ride bicycles from the main road along the path, which is a small asphalt road where traffic is very light, to the entrance and both sides of the road are covered with trees and the plantations of the locals in the area.



Figure 7 Nang Phya Leuad Kao Cave, Moo 11, Padang Bezar Sub-District

3) Arranging activities relating to cycling tourism

3.1) In the Songkhla Special Economic Zone, bicycle riding activities have been continuously arranged by the various sectors, as follows.

a. Arrangements of bicycle riding activities by the local bicycle clubs; such as, the Sadaocycling club, at least once a year; this activity has been arranged every year. The budget is supported by various authorities, namely, the Muang Sadao Municipality, Tourism Authority of Thailand, Hatyai Office, Songkhla Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports, private sectors and a network of members from the bike club. There is bicycle riding for competitions, and tourism for the bicycle riding activity arrangements that has about 1,000 participants from Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore joining the activity for each arrangement. Most of the bike routes for

bicycle riding activity arrangements in the past are the routes to the main tourist attractions in the area or nearby sub-districts; such as, the bike route to the Klong Yon, Samnak Taao Sub-District or the route to the Kao Lae, Sadao Sub-District, and so on. (see Figure 8).



Figure 8 Arrangement of bicycle riding activity by the Sadao cycling club

b. Arrangements of the bicycle riding activities by other sectors. These bicycle riding activities are mostly active during festivals; such as, a riding activity under the theme of the CAR FREE DAY at the Songkhla Gateway to ASEAN on the 18th September 2016. It was arranged on the Car Free Day to foster a campaign to use bicycles or other transportation systems instead of the car. The starting point was at the Thailand-Malaysia Border Arch at the Samnak Kham Sub-District Municipality (Dannok) to the road along the Thailand-Malaysia Border with a total distance of 30 kilometres that had 1,500 participants from Thailand and Malaysia.

3.2) Bicycle riding activity to connect the relationship between Thailand and Malaysia

a. The Padang Bezar Bike to Perlis 2016, arranged by the Padang Bezar Municipality and the Padang Bezar Bike Club and other related authorities. The budget was supported by various sectors; such as, the Tourism Authority of Thailand, Hatyai Office. The ride was from the Padang Bezar Sub-District to Perlis, Malaysia with approximately 2,000 Thai and foreign participants participating in the event.

b. The Sadao Bike to Kedah 2017, arranged by the Sadao Municipality and the Sadao Bike Club and other related authorities. The budget was supported by various sectors; such as, the Songkhla Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports. The riding was from the Sadao District to the Uttrara University, Kedah, Malaysia with approximately 1,000 Thai and foreign participants taking part.

4) Facilities for cycling tourists

4.1) Accommodation

a. Sadao Sub-District: Most accommodation in the Sadao Sub-District are about 10–50 rooms, medium-sized apartments and resorts with a rental price of around 300–500 baht/night (see Figures 9 and 10). The facilities for cycling tourists find that most had parking lots where bikes share the area with other vehicles. Some places had a specific area for bicycles, including a safety system in parking lots. In the past, there were some cycling tourists, both Thai and Malaysian, who had stayed in the area and most of them were event cyclists. Some of them were touring cyclists from Malaysia, Singapore and European countries, who came from Malaysia and spent time traveling and staying overnight for about one night (see Figure 11).



Figure 9 Accommodation at Sadao Sub-District



Figure 10 Parking and specific areas for bicycles at accommodation in the Sadao Sub-District



Figure 11 Cycling tourists in Songkhla Special Economic Zone

b. Samnak Kham Sub-District: Most accommodation in the Samnak Kham Sub-District are about 100-200 rooms, two to four stars, medium sized hotels with rental prices of about 600–1000 baht/night (see Figure 12). Most are located at Ban Thai-Changloan by the Sadao Customs Checkpoint, also known as Dannok, where Malaysian and Singaporean tourists loved to come and visit. Facilities for cycling tourists are found with most having parking lots, where bikes share the area with other vehicles, and safety systems in parking lots are available. In addition, there are places for washing and drying clothes or laundries near the accommodation, where tourists can use the services. Previously, few cycling tourists stayed in this area, except for accommodation along the cycling path that is remote from Dannok, because Dannok was mostly crowded with tourists and entertainment tourist attractions.



Figure 12 Accommodations at Samnak Kham Sub-District

c. Samnak Tao Sub-District: Accommodation in Samnak Tao Sub-District has a few small-sized resorts, because most areas were forest, rubber plantations, fruit gardens, and the houses of locals in the area. Previously, few cycling tourists stayed in the area. At present, the area is being prepared for camping, with facilities; such as, restrooms and parking lots around the Khlong Sadao Dam for cycling tourists who wanted to stay overnight in the Samnak Tao Sub-District, Sadao District, Songkhla Province.

d. Padang Bezar Sub-District: Most accommodation in the Padang Bezar Sub-District are two-star, small-sized resorts or hotels of less than 50 rooms with a rental price of around 300–500 baht/night. Previously, a few cycling tourists stayed in this area, because most tourists traveling from Malaysia preferred to come through the Sadao Customs Checkpoint rather than the Padang Bezar Customs Checkpoint.

4.2) Restaurants and stores

There are quite a large number of restaurants and stores in the Songkhla Special Economic Zone, especially around the main tourist attractions, downtown, communities and accommodation area, except some sub-districts; such as, the Samnak Tao sub-district and some bike route areas that have a few restaurants and stores (see Figure 13). Most restaurants

and stores belonged to the locals in the area and serve both Thai food, and halal food that Muslim tourists are able to use.



Figure 13 Restaurant at Sadao Sub-District and store at Samnak Tao Sub-District

4.3) Bike shops and repairs

There are not many bike shops in the Songkhla Special Economic Zone. Each sub-district has about two to three bike shops. The Sadao Sub-District has the largest number of bike shops, because the locals in the area rather love to ride bicycles more than those in other sub-districts. Products sold were various styles of bicycles and equipment related to cycling. Additionally, there are repair shops for a bike repair service for cycling tourists. Previously, bike repair shops linked their repair service in bicycle riding activity arrangements in the area.



Figure 14 Bike shop and repair at Sadao Sub-District

4.4) Bicycle signs

There are no bicycle signs in the Songkhla Special Economic Zone. Neither bike-lane signs nor bike-friendly signage showing information concerning bicycle routes, tourism programs, local activities, or bike route maps.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study of the cycling tourism situation in the Songkhla Special Economic Zone found that plans relating to cycling tourism in the Zone included bike-lane arrangements in the main tourist attractions, especially those that are expected to attract cycling tourists; such as, the Khlong Sadao Dam, and Kao Lae. In addition, there are landscape adjustment plans, attractions and facility creation plans for cycling tourists in the main tourist locations; such as, stopovers, parking lots, restrooms and camping areas, including security measures. This is because it is necessary to promote local tourist attractions to be ecotourism tourist attractions, that are the main destinations for cycling tourists.

Tourism attractions are found where both natural and cultural, especially beautiful, scenery and the richness of the natural resources can attract cycling tourists. This is because tourism attractions; such as, natural resources, are an important determinant of the attractiveness of a bicycle tourism destination (Lee and Huang, 2014; 285), especially the Khlong Sadao Dam, which is the large dam in the Songkhla province. This similar to the other main destinations of the cycling tourists, mostly the banks of large rivers; such as, the Rhine and Elbe in Germany (European Commission, 2015; 4) and bike routes along the Danube, which was the best cycle route in Austria (Meschik, 2012; 43), and cultural tourist attractions having beautiful architecture and an interesting history. From the existing tourism attractions in the area, it enables to create tourism route and community participation cycling tourism program. According to the study of Tammachak Lakbanchong (2019) stated that tourism resources of Koh Sukorn Community, Trang province, including natural and human inventive formulate to be tourism program in slow tourism that tally with community way of life.

Tourists are able to ride bicycles from the main road along the entrance path of the tourist attractions that are mostly small roads with light traffic and both sides with trees, rubber plantations and fruit garden of the locals. Concordant with the idea from Lee and Huang (2014; 285), tourist attractions linking with bike routes or main roads is an important factor attracting tourists.

Bicycle riding activity arrangements in the area showed that there are activity arrangements held by various sectors, both government and private, at least once a year. These arrangements are in the form of competitions, tourism, festival riding and relationship connections between Thailand and Malaysia, and so on. The routes used for biking are the routes to the main tourist attractions; such as, Kao Lae, Klong Yon, the Thai-Malaysia Border Road and the Khlong Sadao Dam. There are about 1,000 participants from Thailand, Malaysia

and Singapore for each activity arrangement, which creates a huge liveliness in the area, especially in accommodation and restaurants, because most tourists coming from up-country or abroad usually stay overnight for the night prior to the date of the activity arrangement.

Facilities for cycling tourists: first, accommodation indicated that there were various styles and prices for hotels, apartments and resorts in the Songkhla Special Economic Zone concordant with the need for a wide range of accommodation types. For example, some tourists preferred cheap accommodation; such as, hostels, apartments, or pitching tents; others might need accommodation with full facilities; such as, hotels and resorts (Ritchie, 1998; 581). Previously, most cycling tourists preferred to stay in the Sadao Sub-District, where bicycle-riding activity arrangements were frequently held. The atmosphere was quite peaceful, but room prices were not high. Room prices were about 300–500 baht/night, consistent with the needs of cycling tourists, especially those from abroad who prefer economy accommodation, because most of them spent long periods traveling, where a budget must be efficiently allocated throughout the trip (Arunothaipipat and Dissyabut, 2017; 1,483). Furthermore, there is a camping area, including restrooms, prepared for tourists who want to use a tent overnight around the Khlong Sadao Dam. However, some tourist groups with high incomes, usually considered the facilities more than the price. Facilities for tourists in this accommodation were showed that most had parking lots that shared with other vehicles. There were clothes-washing and drying places or laundries nearby, where tourists were able to use the services. Most had spent many days travelling and needed to wash and dry their limited clothing. Nevertheless, most accommodation in the area still lacked other facilities for cycling tourists; such as, bicycle maintenance tools, bicycle cleaning places, information services concerning cycling tourism and security measures, especially that of safe bicycle storage location. Previously, most cycling tourists who stayed in the area were event cyclists, some were touring cyclists from Malaysia and European countries like Germany or the Netherlands. Some cycling tourists from the European countries entered the Songkhla Special Economic Zone from Malaysia. Similar to the study of Arunothaipipat and Dissyabut (2017; 1,481) who found that cycling tourists that had traveled across continents from their own country, had visited and stayed, in various countries before entering Thailand via the borders of neighboring countries; such as, Malaysia, Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos. These tourists stayed overnight for about one night.

Restaurants and stores are found where many restaurants and stores in the area are suitable for cyclists from various cultures; such as, Thai, Muslim, and international cultures. Most facilities belonged to the locals in the area, which was consistent with the needs of those cycling tourists who wanted to buy products and eat local food along their bike route (Nickerson et al, 2014; 7).

Bike shops and repairs were found, but there were not many of them in the area that sold bicycles, bicycle parts, bicycle maintenance tools or repair shops offering bicycle repairs to cycling tourists. In addition, most bike shops and repairs in the area were located in the town and not scattered out-of-town or on bike routes where tourists needed shops to repair, sell parts or repair bicycle tools in case bicycles broke down, especially on the path the cycling tourists travelled along (Ritchie, 1998; 581).

Bicycle signs in Songkhla Special Economic Zone, that there are no bicycle signs in Songkhla Special Economic Zone neither bike-lane signs nor bike-friendly signage that showed information regarding bike routes, tourism programs, local activities or bike route maps.

The study of the cycling tourism situation in the Songkhla Special Economic Zone was only a study of the local situation. To study developing cycling tourism in the Songkhla Special Economic Zone, a further study should be on the needs of all the cycling tourists in the whole area to determine the way to develop a suitable system the local area for the needs of all cycling tourists in the Songkhla Special Economic Zone.

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