

PLANNING BEST PRACTICES INFORMS THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SCUBA DIVING TOURISM ATTRACTION ON THE GOLD COAST IN QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA?

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The Gold Coast, in Queensland, Australia, represents an opportunity to consider putting in place an artificial reef to attract more visitors. SCUBA diving is a form of tourism which has grown in popularity over the last two decades, illustrated through the increased number of diving certifications issued worldwide. The Australian SCUBA diving tourism industry makes a large and important contribution to the Australian economy. In this way the dive-related tourism industry is one of the fastest growing tourism sectors, which has resulted in significant social, economic and environmental impacts. The research proposal puts forward an exploratory study that will seek to analyse how Planning Best Practices (PBPs) inform the development of a proposed SCUBA diving tourism attraction on the Gold Coast, in Queensland Australia. Further exploration will seek to determine which PBPs are appropriate for the development of a proposed SCUBA Diving Attraction (SDA). The research will then seek to determine to what extent Gold Coast tourism stakeholders' perceptions on planning techniques align with the identified planning best practices of an SDA. The research design for the current project will impose a multimethod approach that will be constructed over two phases. The first phase will construct a planning best practice framework for planning a SDA. The research will first identify the PBPs across different disciplines. From the PBPs analysis, the research will then investigate which PBPs attributes are appropriate for the proposed SDA. The research design's second phase aims to test what happens when theoretically formulated PBPs are set against a proposed SDA through semi-structured interviews with a variety of stakeholders.

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