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Proposed Business Strategy to Improve the Business Performance of Yoga Teacher Training Program at Eling Academy

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Abstract

The global wellness industry is experiencing significant growth, driven by increasing consumer awareness of preventive health, spiritual balance, and holistic well-being. This research systematically analyzes the internal and external factors affecting the business performance of the YTT program at Eling Academy and formulates an appropriate business strategy. A qualitative case study approach is employed, using in-depth interviews and observations for primary data collection, while secondary data include internal company data, websites, articles, journals, and books. The analysis integrates internal and external perspectives. Internal analysis includes VRIO analysis and Customer Experience Analysis, weighted through the Internal Factor Analysis Summary (IFAS). External analysis comprises PESTEL analysis, Porter's Five Forces, and 4-Component Competitor Analysis, weighted using the External Factor Analysis Summary (EFAS). The findings are validated through SWOT and translated into strategies using the TOWS matrix. Four key strategies are proposed: (1) initiating lineage-based differentiation and authentic methods and sequences of *Bali Hatha Yoga* through enhanced market positioning; (2) strengthening international visibility through digital presence and collaboration; (3) enhancing operational readiness to improve program frequency and consistency; and (4) developing a comprehensive student and alumni ecosystem to foster sustained engagement. These strategies are integrated into a multi-year implementation plan, guiding Eling Academy from activation to consolidation and ultimately toward premiumization and sustainable growth. Overall, this research identifies key internal and external factors and proposes a strategy to close the activation gap, focusing on differentiation, operational systematization, and brand repositioning to achieve long-term competitive advantage and sustainability.

Keywords:
Yoga Teacher Training (YTT); Eling Acacemy; Bali Hatha Yoga; Lineage-Based Differentiation; Bali Yoga Industry

INTRODUCTION

The global wellness industry is experiencing significant growth, driven by increasing consumer awareness of preventive health, spiritual balance, and holistic well-being (Global Wellness Institute, 2024). This global market reached a record USD 6.3 trillion in 2023 and is projected to surpass USD 9 trillion by 2028. Yoga plays a central role in this trend, shifting from just a physical activity becomes a path to personal transformation (Yoga Alliance, 2022). Increased awareness of mental and physical health has positioned yoga as a crucial intervention in improving student well-being and overall academic performance (Anburani et al., 2023; Chauhan & Saxena, 2024). In addition, yoga has been clinically proven to be effective as a complementary therapy for mental health in the modern era (Baghel, 2023). Most of people also believe that yoga is not only just a physical exercise, but also a way of life. Bali's tourism recovery post-pandemic has also strengthened the economic feasibility of wellness-based education. Based on data from BPS (2025), the island welcomed 697,107 foreign visitors in July 2025, an increase compared to 2024, and a significant portion of these travelers, especially long-stay visitors, participate in "learning tourism" not merely retreats, but certified skill-based programs such as yoga teacher training. This shift is driving a high demand for immersive long-term educational programs such as Yoga Teacher Training (YTT), which emphasizes philosophical foundations, spiritual lineage, and depth of experience.

Bali, Indonesia, has developed as one of the world's leading YTT destinations, buoyed by its spiritual environment, rich culture, and image as a global wellness hub. Bali has a unique typology of wellness tourism because it is based on traditional healing and local wisdom that is difficult to replicate by other destinations (Arida et al., 2024; Utami, 2021). The sustainable development of spiritual tourism in Bali requires a strategic framework that is able to revitalize ancient yoga methods to remain relevant to the needs of the global market (Acri, 2025; Rahyuda, 2022). However, the YTT market in Bali is highly competitive and dominated by foreign-owned schools, which operate with high frequency, strong international visibility, and standardized program structures. This phenomenon shows a shift in tourist motivation from recreation to transformative tourism that emphasizes the search for meaning and self-development. Modern wellness travelers tend to seek experiences that have a strong philosophical depth and cultural authenticity. Amid the rampant commercialization of yoga, there is a challenge for local institutions to maintain their traditional identities while remaining globally competitive. Yoga has also been integrated as an ongoing educational activity for practitioners to maintain the depth of their theoretical and practical knowledge (Hartigan, 2017). Competitive advantage no longer comes only from physical facilities, but from the ability of the destination to offer a learning process that changes the life perspective of the participants.

Eling Academy, as a local yoga & wellness training institution in Bali, offers a unique value proposition through Bali Hatha Yoga, an authentic yoga method and sequence rooted in Balinese spiritual traditions and founded by its spiritual master, Sri Bhagawan Sripada Bhaskara. Despite having a strong cultural and philosophical foundation, Eling Academy has not been able to translate this uniqueness into optimal business performance. Internal operational data for 2024–2025 shows that Eling Academy only organizes two batches of YTT 200 hours annually, far below the industry average of six to twelve batches per year. The gap in the frequency of this program is the main indicator of low business performance because it directly affect the financial performance of the company (David, 2011).

This raises a fundamental strategic question: why does an institution with unique spiritual and cultural assets underperform in a growing market and increasingly value authenticity?

This research aims to bridge the gap between internal potential (authenticity, pedigree) and suboptimal market output. Theoretically, this study is relevant to strategic management because it explores how cultural capital can be converted into a sustainable competitive advantage through the process of institutionalization (Astuti, 2019). Based on these questions, this study seeks to answer the question: How do internal and external conditions affect the performance of YTT Eling Academy, what key factors need to be considered, and what business strategies can be proposed to improve the positioning, differentiation, and sustainability of the YTT program at Eling Academy?

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design (Creswell, 2013), as the research problems related to strategic, identity, and cultural issues required in-depth interpretation of stakeholder perspectives. Data collection was conducted through triangulation of two sources. Primary data consisted of fourteen semi-structured, in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including founders, management, instructors, and local and international alumni, to understand the institution's identity, operational barriers, and participant experiences. The number of respondents was guided by the principle of data saturation, where no new insights emerged from additional interviews (Creswell, 2013).

Secondary data included internal documents (e.g., program reports and participant demographics), competitor references (House of Om, YogaUnion Bali, Yogmantra Bali), and industry reports (e.g., Global Wellness Institute and Yoga Alliance) to support and validate the findings. These sources provided contextual understanding of organizational background, performance, and the external market environment.

Data analysis followed Thematic Analysis Braun & Clarke, (2006) to identify patterns and strategic issues from interview transcripts. The process included familiarization with the data, coding, theme development, review, and interpretation. The findings were then validated through triangulation with secondary data to ensure consistency and reliability (Archibald, 2016).

The strategic analysis applied three frameworks. Internal analysis evaluated resources and capabilities using the VRIO framework and Customer Experience Analysis, summarized in the Internal Factor Analysis Summary (IFAS). External analysis examined macro conditions using PESTEL analysis and industry structure through Porter's Five Forces, summarized in the External Factor Analysis Summary (EFAS). Strategy formulation integrated IFAS and EFAS through the SWOT matrix and developed strategic alternatives using the TOWS matrix.

The research population included stakeholders directly involved in the YTT Eling Academy program, selected through purposive sampling based on their relevance to the research objectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis integrates qualitative insights from thematic analysis and quantitative diagnostic scores from various strategic frameworks to explain a core problem: the existence of a gap between Eling Academy's unique authenticity assets and low market performance. This comprehensive approach ensures that the proposed strategy is grounded in theory and supported by empirical findings.

Thematic analysis confirms that Eling Academy's core strength lies in identity-based differentiation. The two main themes, namely Holistic Transformation and Healing as the Key Promises, and Bali Hatha Yoga and Balinese Wisdom as Unique Differentiators, show a shared perception among stakeholders that the value of the program goes beyond technical yoga certificates and offers deep personal and spiritual growth, rooted in Bali's authentic spiritual lineage. Alumni have repeatedly described this experience as "one of the most historic" and "a very profound healing process", affirming that the program provides tremendous intrinsic value and is rarely found in the standardized market-oriented YTT (Cohen, 2013). The delivery of authentic knowledge, rather than imitation, is the main foundation of an institution's competitive advantage.

The VRIO analysis evaluates the strategic potential of these internal resources (Table 1). The results are crucial in explaining underperformance: The Bali Hatha Yoga method is the only fully organized resource with a structured curriculum, standardized teaching modules, and in-house instructor training. Therefore, it is categorized as a Sustainable Competitive Advantage (SCA). The other four main resources, including the Founder's Spiritual Lineage, Transformational Experience, and Balinese Cultural Integration remain in the Unused Competitive Advantage (UCA) category because they have not been systematically translated into organizational processes or external branding. This finding is important: the problem of Eling Academy is not a lack of resources, but a lack of strategic resource utilization. The unavailability of the "O" (Organized) aspect in the VRIO directly emerges as a significant drawback: low market visibility, program inconsistencies, and reliance on individual performance rather than institutional systems. For example, a founder's spiritual lineage has great symbolic value, but is not fully integrated into the brand narrative or knowledge transfer protocol. As a result, its competitive value is latent, it exists but it is not effective in consistently encouraging registration or premium pricing. Converting UCA to SCA requires a shift from reliance on individuals towards institutional architecture, which is the focus of the next strategy.

Based on VRIO's analysis, although Eling Academy has a rare spiritual lineage, this asset is classified as an Unused Competitive Advantage due to its high dependence on the founding figure. Theoretically, valuable and hard-to-replicate resources will not result in a sustained competitive advantage if they are not supported by an organizational structure that is able to replicate the quality of service consistently. The lack of operational standardization hinders the institution's ability to convert spiritual values into dynamic business capabilities in the international market. Therefore, it is necessary to integrate internal resource management with a response to changing market dynamics.

Tablel 1. Summary of Eling Academy’s VRIO

Resources/Capability	Valuable ?	Rare?	Inimitable?	Organized ?	Competitive Status
Bali Hatha Yoga method and unique sequence	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Sustainable Competitive Advantage (SCA)
Founder’s Spiritual Lineage	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partial	Unused Competitive Advantage (UCA)
Transformational Experience	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partial	Unused Competitive Advantage (UCA)
Balinese Cultural Integration	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partial	Unused Competitive Advantage (UCA)

Source: Author, 2025

In the perspective of the Resource-bSed View (RBC), Eling Academy's ability to maintain a competitive advantage is highly dependent on the accumulation of strategic asset stocks that competitors do not easily replicate. Empirical evaluation of RBV shows that human capital and organizational knowledge are the main drivers of business value (Gerhart & Feng, 2021). However, there are often causal ambiguities both within and within the company that hinder the optimal use of resources. Therefore, companies must dynamically manage their technology capabilities and resources to remain relevant in the digital age (Collins, 2021; Hsu & Ziedonis, 2013). This RBV approach has proven to be effective in providing a competitive advantage for companies that are able to exploit the uniqueness of their culture (Hendayana et al., 2019; Waluyo, 2020).

Customer experience analysis was carried out by mapping the themes that emerged from in-depth interviews conducted with fourteen respondents. Critical operational performance gaps were found, which provided a qualitative explanation for the low activation of institutional excellence. Although the spiritual depth and healing process contained in the program is highly appreciated and felt, the operational execution has consistently been criticized for being considered unstructured and inconsistent. Alumni reported a variety of issues, such as unclear pre-arrival communication, inconsistent scheduling, abrupt changes, as well as facilities that did not match the perception of premium quality of the spiritual content delivered. These operational inconsistencies, as highlighted in the theme *of Strategic and Operational Constraints*, significantly lower the external perception of the institution's professionalism and competitiveness, even though the internal values are very unique and distinctive. The absence of a standardized system in the packaging of experiences directly limits the ability to increase the frequency of programs or set higher prices. The experience gap, as conveyed by the alumni, shows that the internal quality of spiritual transmission is not reflected in the external professionalism of the service delivery system. These findings are in line with service management theory which states that the perception of quality of the entire service system is often more decisive than the core quality of the product itself. In addition, the lack of systematization in the customer journey also has an impact on the third theme, *Community as a Continuing Journey*, as the absence of structured post-YTT support and the absence of a formalized alumni network leads to a loss of relational capital after graduation, thus hampering word-of-mouth marketing and the potential for repeat business. The low frequency of programs (twice per year) further exacerbates this problem as it reduces the flow of new advocates and limits the organic growth of communities, which are actually the main market drivers for authenticity-based education (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2015).

The findings regarding communication ambiguities and operational inconsistencies reflect a significant service gap between spiritual promise and execution reality. In the education services industry, the physical environment and the quality of initial interaction greatly determine the overall perception of the customer's perception of the credibility of the institution. Failure to meet basic operational expectations can undermine participants' confidence, even though the educational content provided is of very high quality. To achieve a premium position, Eling Academy must ensure that every touchpoint in the customer journey is professionally managed to create a coherent transformative experience (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Quantitative IFAS analysis (Table 2) validated these internal findings. The Weighted Score of 2.63 is only slightly above the average value of 2.50. This score shows the characteristics of an organization that actually has competitive resources but is weak in execution. The value essentially reflects the fierce competition between the strong and hard-to-replicate Strength (with a total of 1.67) and the high-weighted operational and market weakness (0.56 in total, but disproportionately impacting due to its rating of 1.0). The interpretation of the score of 2.63 is that Eling Academy has a solid internal foundation, but it is vulnerable and strategically hampered by its inability to operationalize its excellence. In particular, the high weight given to weakness (total weight of 0.33) reflects the magnitude of the impact of such weakness on market reach and operational sustainability. The most pressing strategic implication of this score is that Eling Academy's primary task is not to acquire additional resources, but rather to strengthen internal execution and capability development. Institutions must immediately convert their UCAs and address the systemic weaknesses that have been suppressing their competitive performance, despite having a unique value proposition.

Table 2. Summary of IFAS (Internal Factor Analysis Summary)

No.	Key Internal Factor	Weight	Rating	Weighted Score
A	**Strengths**			
1	Bali Hatha Yoga Method and Unique Sequence	0.18	4	0.72
2	Spiritual Lineage and High Credibility of the Founder	0.15	4	0.60
3	Immersive Curriculum Based on Transformation & Healing	0.12	3	0.36
4	High Quality of Training and Personalized Approach	0.08	3	0.24
5	International Accreditation (Yoga Alliance)	0.05	3	0.15
B	**Weaknesses**			
6	Low Global Market Visibility	0.13	1	0.13

No.	Key Internal Factor	Weight	Rating	Weighted Score
	and Awareness			
7	Low Program Frequency (2 batches/year)	0.10	1	0.10
8	Operational Gaps (Lack of Systematization)	0.09	2	0.18
9	Sub-Optimal Experience Packaging and Facility Readiness	0.05	2	0.10
10	Unclear or Poorly Conceptualized Brand Positioning	0.05	1	0.05
	TOTAL	**1.00**		**2.63**

Source: Author, 2025

The external analysis conducted clarifies the opportunities and competitive pressures that shape the YTT market in Bali. PESTEL's analysis shows that the macro environment strongly supports authenticity-based education, driven by political support for Bali as a global wellness hub and economic growth in the long-stay learning tourism sector (Kemenparekraf, 2023). This condition creates an untapped strategic window, where the social trend towards genealogy-based spiritual experiences and authenticity is deeply aligned with Eling Academy's core assets. This strong macro fit is the main reason why market opportunities (O1) gain the highest weight (0.25). However, this potential is aggressively eroded by the competitive landscape. The high growth opportunities make the market very fertile, but access to it is fiercely contested. Legal ambiguities related to foreign operators, for example, create a structural threat (T5) that allows incompatible competitors to develop and compete aggressively but illegally in terms of price and visibility, even when Eling Academy operates within local and international legal frameworks.

Porter's Five Forces analysis was also carried out and the results confirmed that the structure of the industry is characterized by a very high intensity of competition. The threat of a large influx of new entrants (due to low legal barriers for informal and illegal foreign operators) and the high bargaining power of buyers (an abundance of online options and expectations of a packed experience) put constant pressure on Eling Academy. In particular, the level of Industrial Rivalry is very high, dominated by foreign-run schools that set market standards in terms of execution capabilities (high frequency of programs) and aggressive digital branding and promotion. The Perception Bias (T6) identified in EFAS shows that international participants often equate digital visibility with credibility, disproportionately harming Eling Academy. The EFAS score of 2.11 (Table 3) indicates that Eling Academy's current strategy is ineffective in responding to these external threats and opportunities. These results are a strong diagnostic indicator: Eling Academy failed to capture a high-potential market due to a weak strategic response, requiring a thorough reformulation focused on more outward-oriented execution and more assertive articulation of differentiation.

Table 3. Summary of EFAS (External Factor Analysis Summary)

No.	Key Internal Factor	Weight	Rating	Weighted Score
A	**Opportunities**			
1	Rising Global Demand for Lineage-Based Spiritual Education	0.25	3	0.75
2	Shift to Long-Term Learning Tourism	0.15	2	0.30
3	Government Support for Wellness Tourism	0.08	3	0.24
4	Low Local Competition for Authentic Lineage-Based Schools	0.05	4	0.20
B	**Threats**			
5	Market Saturation by Foreign-Owned Schools with Strong Branding	0.20	1	0.20
6	Perception Bias Toward Western Schools (Quality vs. Visibility)	0.12	1	0.12
7	Threat of Substitution (Retreats, Somatic Therapist, ets.)	0.10	2	0.20
8	Expectation of Premium Facilities from International Students	0.05	2	0.10
	TOTAL	**1.00**		**2.11**

Source: Author, 2025

The synthesis of internal and external analysis through the SWOT Matrix confirms the main problem: *the conversion gap*, which is a condition when Eling Academy's unique authenticity (Strength) fails to be converted into visibility and scalability (Opportunity) due to operational weaknesses and weaknesses in positioning. As such, this situation demands a strategic shift from simply owning cultural assets to aggressively activating and systematizing them to be appropriately delivered to the global market. The strategic imperative is clear, which is that institutions must address the low frequency of programs (W7) as the most crucial growth inhibitor, as frequency directly affects visibility (W6), market confidence (T6), and revenue stability.

The TOWS matrix translates these diagnoses into implementable strategies (Table 4). These strategies are designed to focus on Authenticity Activation and Experience Systematization to close the conversion gap. The SO strategy focuses on maximizing pedigree excellence to capture global demand, namely by leveraging the credibility of the founder and the uniqueness of Bali Hatha Yoga as a distinctive yoga method and sequence created directly by the Founder Eling Academy (S1, S2) to target the premium segment oriented towards ethics and spiritual and cultural values (O1/O2), a segment that cannot be authentically served by foreign schools because it does not have local cultural roots. Its main focus is to position Eling Academy as the only option for culturally transmitted in-depth knowledge. A differentiation strategy based on authenticity (brand authenticity) must be at the core of Eling Academy's global marketing narrative. Premium class consumers are willing to pay a higher price for experiences that have valid and honest spiritual connections, not just cultural imitations (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). By highlighting the authentic aspects of "Bali Hatha Yoga", the institution can build a strong emotional attachment with international participants compared to other modern yoga schools (Ram et al,, 2016). This legitimacy will be the main bulwark of defense in the face of market-biased perceptions of Western-owned schools (Fritz et al. 2017).

The WO strategy addresses critical weaknesses to enable scaling, with the most urgent priority being the systematization needed to increase the frequency of programs from two to at least six batches per year (W3/O2). This increase in operational scale is an absolute requirement (*sine qua non*) for business continuity and the formation of trust and market visibility. In addition, increased digital visibility (W1/W2) is essential to reach a large volume of international participants looking for the YTT Bali program online (O1). ST's strategy uses institutional strength defensively, especially by utilizing the Balinese pedigree as a unique protector against Perception Bias (T2), thereby placing Eling Academy's authenticity as a superior form of authenticity and making accreditation (S5) a formal counter signal against non-compliant competitors (T5). Finally, WT's strategy is protective, demanding measures such as improving experience packaging (W4/T4) and strengthening brand signals to reduce the risk of substitution or transfer of potential participants to competitors who appear more organized. The selection and sequencing of TOWS strategies forms the proposed multi-phased business solution.

Brand authenticity is not only a matter of history, but about how the brand image is perceived to be sincere and honest by consumers (Cinelli & LeBoeuf, 2020). In the tourism industry, authenticity plays an important role in creating emotional attachment and customer trust in a destination (Assiouras et al., 2015; Portal et al., 2019). The determinant of brand authenticity is often based on perceived quality and direct experience during the customer journey (Bruhn et al., 2012; Moulart et al., 2016). An authentic brand experience significantly increases customer loyalty, especially when they feel they have a spiritual connection to the place (Budi et al., 2021; Manthiou et al.m 2018). Recent research confirms that brand authenticity on social media is a strong credibility signal for foreign tourists (Safeer et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2023). This is crucial to distinguish Eling Academy from other foreign-owned yoga schools that may lack local philosophical depth (Maharani & Sudarningsih, 2023; Oklevik et al., 2022; Södergren, 2021).

Table 4. TOWS Matrix for Eling Academy YTT

	S (Strengths)	**W (Weaknesses)**
O (Opportunities)	**SO Strategies (Maxi-Maxi):**	**WO Strategies (Mini-Maxi):**
	O.1. Leverage spiritual lineage and Bali Hatha Yoga (S1, S2) to capture global demand (O1, O2).	O.3. Strengthen digital visibility and narrative (W1, W2) to enter the international learning tourism market (O1)
	O.2. Use Accreditation (S5) as a credibility signal for the ethical/legal segment (O5).	O.4 Increase program frequency (W3) to absorb rising demand (O2)

	S (Strengths)	W (Weaknesses)
T (Threats)	**ST Strategies (Maxi-Mini)**	**WT Strategies (Mini-Mini)**
	T.1. Aggressive differentiation through lineage legitimacy (S1) to counter Western schools bias (T2).	T.3. Strengthen branding signal (W1) to overcome market bias toward foreign schools (T2)
	T.2. Position Bali Hatha Yoga (S2) as a unique identity to avoid market saturation (T1).	T.4. Improve experience packaging and facilities (W4) to reduce defection to more curated competitors (T4).

Source: Author, 2025

Based on the TOWS Matrix above, the four strategic priorities generated form the proposed business solution, namely: (1) Activation of Genealogy and Brand Positioning to build a clear market identity, (2) Increased Operational Readiness to be able to achieve competitive scale (minimum 6 batches per year), (3) Development of Global Visibility through digital investment, and (4) Curation of Ecosystem and Experience to support premium pricing. This comprehensive strategy is designed to be implemented through a rigorous three-year development sequence, consisting of Activation, Scale-Up, and Premiumization phases, based on the need to systematically build market credibility and operational maturity before undertaking aggressive growth. The Activation Phase (Year 1) focuses on fixing the most critical performance barriers, namely low program frequency and weak digital visibility. This step is important to build a foundation of market confidence and competitive signals. The Scale-Up Phase (Year 2) leverages increased visibility to optimize the overall customer journey, with a focus on consistency, quality assurance in implementation, and the formalization of Unused Competitive Advantage (UCA) into standard operating procedures. The Premiumization Phase (Year 3) takes advantage of the credibility and operational maturity that has been formed to diversify. For example, through advanced modules as well as repositioning the Academy at the highest level of the market in terms of price and institutional authority based on local spiritual and cultural values, thereby ensuring a sustainable competitive advantage sourced from cultural capital.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzed the internal and external factors affecting the business performance of Eling Academy's Yoga Teacher Training (YTT) program and identified that its low performance and limited program frequency were not due to a lack of unique spiritual and cultural assets, but rather a strategic activation gap preventing the conversion of unused competitive advantages into recognized market differentiation. To address this, the study proposed a business strategy focused on activating genealogy-based differentiation, strengthening operational systematization to achieve competitive scale, and repositioning the brand to enhance long-term sustainability and global competitiveness. The recommended approach emphasized immediate actions, including digital rebranding to position the Academy as an educational institution grounded in spiritual genealogy authenticity, increasing program frequency to reach a competitive level, and standardizing operations and customer experience to support future premium pricing. Despite its contributions, the study was limited by its single case study scope, short data collection period, and qualitative nature. Therefore, future research is recommended to incorporate quantitative methods, particularly to assess international participants' willingness to pay and key trust factors, as well as to develop measurable indicators for evaluating brand equity performance following the implementation of the proposed strategies.

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