

Yoga and Wellness Tourism in India: Development Opportunities and Challenges

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Abstract

Along with other Indian traditional teachings like Ayurveda, Chakra Healing, and Sound Healing, yoga, an age-old approach for treating mental, physical, and spiritual issues, is increasingly gaining popularity in a tourist destination like India. India still has a number of issues that impede the growth of yoga tourism in India, despite the substantial cash it receives from yoga tourists and despite the ads and oversight of organizations over the operations and activities of yoga centers. The study discusses major development issues, challenges and occasions in the yoga and wellness tourism of India. A total of 37 key sources of information were used in this study and a literature review method was used to collect data. Due to the findings, yoga tourism in India faces a number of obstacles and issues, including a lack of advertising, poor health conditions, and a lack of safety and security, but because it has so much potential, if it is controlled and organized by effective institutions, it can move forward and grow faster.

1. Introduction

The tourism sector is one of the fastest-developing in the globe (Dhiraj & Kumar, 2021) and has a wide range of possible applications (Kumari, 2019). India draws a lot of visitors each year due to its rich cultural legacy, traditional knowledge, and range of attractions (Chakravarty, 2024). Ayurveda, Unani, Homeopathy, and Naturopathy are just a few of the several conventional treatments available in India that offer numerous health benefits to visitors and India is well-known for its history of yoga and meditation, which have

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countless advantages for treating mental, moral, physical, and spiritual illnesses and problems (Manju & Chandran, 2017).

The idea of “well-being” has been debated by philosophers for hundreds of years (Dillette et al., 2020), and yoga, which is a way of promoting well-being, has been a part of human life since the dawn of time and attained higher spiritual heights in India (Kumari & Gwala, 2022, p. 39). According to Dhiraj and Kumar (2021), yoga is now being investigated as an important factor in both the economic and social spheres, and it brings a new component to the sector in the form of yoga tourism, such as economic benefits of celebrity-induced yoga (Nair and Solanki, 2022), wellness tourism (Pande, 2024), medical and economic aspects of yoga activities (Rao et al., 2024; Mutlu & Nazli, 2023).

According to Nair and Solanki (2022) yoga tourism is a self-transforming experience that can significantly affect the mind, spirit and the body. According to Dhiraj and Kumar (2021), yoga is said to depend on eight limbs: Yamas (moral restrictions), Niyamas (observance), Asanas (posture), Pranayamas (breath-control), Pratyaharas (sensory withdrawal), Dhranas (concentration), Dhyanas (meditation), and Samadhi (enlightenment). Swamy and Agoramoorthy (2021), Mylan (2024), and Pande (2024) noted that yoga tourism is an emerging phenomenon in India, with a huge financial potential to boost income in the wellness travel sector. Despite the above-mentioned facts regarding the enormous influence of yoga on the tourism industry, in this case India’s tourism, and the high potential of yoga tourism in India, there are still numerous problems and obstacles facing the country’s yoga tourism industry that prevent it from growing. Various social, cultural, environmental, and other issues, difficulties, and opportunities associated to the progress of yoga tourism in India will be outlined and analyzed in this study through a systematic literature review.

2. Literature review

In terms of health, wellness, medicinal tourism, yoga is a key component of Indian tourism (Tripathi & Said, 2023; Dhiraj & Kumar, 2021). Dillette et al. (2020) assert that yoga tourism can promote tourists’ psychological well-being both during and after their journey. It also suggests yoga tourism has the power to change the lives of those who take part in it. Numerous activities (yoga, workshops, adventurous, etc.), retreat environments (healing, retreat, and mindfulness), and natural settings are mentioned in the research as transformative catalysts that alter one’s mental and physical state.

Since the Indian tourist sector accounted for 31.8 million jobs in 2020, or 7.3% of all employment in the nation, it has a significant impact on the creation of employment prospects for locals (Kumari & Mathur, 2022, p. 163). According to McCartney (2020), India ranks in the top five nations with the most yoga retreats, with 1178, followed by Indonesia (542), Spain (459), Thailand (302), the US (252), and Portugal (250). Dhiraj and Kumar (2021) identified a number of elements that rank India among the best yoga tourist destinations in the world, including its top-tier yoga centers, institutions for promoting yoga education and research in India with government support, and its abundance of English-speaking instructors.

India can promote yoga tourism more successfully than some other nations since it has various advantages that enable it to compete with its rivals (Rao et al., 2024; Kumar, 2017). The genuineness of yoga in India has been well-documented and draws tourists (Maddox, 2014). India has many potentials and prospects for the progress of its yoga tourism sector, but there are also problems and difficulties. The development of yoga tourism in India (Kumari & Gwala, 2022) listed certain difficulties Rajasthan's yoga tourist industry experienced. For instance, despite Rajasthan receiving the "Best State Award for Best Tourist Destination" in 2022 (ThePrint, 2022), there is a shortage of infrastructure, safety and security, and experienced and competent human resources in yoga tourism. There are obstacles to Indian health tourism, according to Manju and Chandran (2017). These include unclean food handling practices, an unhygienic environment caused by inefficient rubbish collection, a lack of transportation options, and a lack of industry standards. After the COVID-19 epidemic, Swamy and Agoramoorthy (2021) noted various concerns with yoga tourism in India, including the loss of nearly 21.5 million jobs related to the industry as a result of travel restrictions.

3. Methodology

The exploratory research aims to discuss and explain major development issues, challenges and occasions in the yoga and wellness tourism of India and find an answer to this fundamental research question: "How can yoga and wellness tourism in India get developed while keeping its authenticity with the expectations of tourists in this postmodern world?" The technique of collecting data in this research is a literature review through a bibliometric analysis. The bibliometric perspective of the study includes the short title of the study, the name of the authors, the year of publication of the study, the qualitative or quantitative techniques used in the studies, and the fundamental findings of each research. Five steps took place during the analysis:

1. Number of studies found via database searching via EBSCO, Web of Science, and Google Scholar
2. Number of studies screened for relevance or irrelevance by taking into account the keywords and abstracts of key studies
3. Number of studies assessed for eligibility: Two experts in the field of yoga tourism is contacted to evaluate the appropriateness of the studies.
4. Number of studies excluded with reasons for exclusion: Studies with no citation, book parts, and theses partially related to yoga activities
5. Final number of studies included in qualitative analysis

A total of 37 research articles have been selected as the fundamental source of study data. The information of the key sources was within the scope of these keywords/discourse: “India tourism, yoga tourism, wellness tourism, sustainable tourism, and medical tourism” and combination of these key words along with “challenges” and “opportunities in yoga” and “India tourism”. The most-cited and the latest fundamental studies in the tourism and hospitality field are also considered while deciding on selecting the key and impactful research articles, which are more cited in the current literature. The authors collected data for this research from late May 2023 until March 2024.

4. Findings and discussion

Table 1 offers a thorough summary of the research studies done on yoga tourism. These studies study many facets of yoga tourism using a wide range of topics and research methodologies. The study of variables influencing visitor behavior, such as attitudes, satisfaction, and cultural experiences, is a recurring issue. The studies also provided insight into how marketing tactics, destination development, and outside influences like the COVID-19 influenced the yoga tourism sector.

When comparing the research, it is clear that there is an increasing desire to comprehend the difficulties and possibilities in the sector of yoga tourism. Numerous studies stress the necessity of ethical tourism practices (Mylan, 2024) and emphasize the value of environmental sustainability and community empowerment (Kumari & Mathur, 2022). Other recurrent themes in yoga tourism include celebrity impact and the quest for authenticity. The studies also highlight the potential economic advantages of yoga travel, including job prospects, money generating, and the development of human capital.

The selected studies' methodology combines both quantitative and qualitative methods. By combining statistical analysis with in-depth examination of individual experiences and views, this enables a thorough grasp of the subject. The study's findings help tourist authorities, yoga studios, and policymakers build strategies and suggestions for different stakeholders in the yoga tourism sector. These suggestions frequently center on increasing marketing tactics, boosting destination infrastructure, guaranteeing top-notch experiences, and encouraging ethical and sustainable behavior.

Table 1: Bibliometric analysis

#	Short Title	Author Name & Year	Method	Findings
1	Sustaining inner transformation via spiritual tourism	Chhabra & Kim, 2024	Interview	The exploratory study recommends a sustained transformation continuum for spiritual retreat centers.
2	Motivations of millennials for spiritual travel	Kainthola et al., 2024	Interview and snowball sampling	The study presents the key points and motivations of the Indian urban millennial spiritual visitors.
3	Evaluating global perceptions of India	Kaurav et al., 2024	Qualitative and quantitative	Motivations of inbound visitors: culinary interest, spiritual pursuit, cost, curiosity about culture and natural allure.
4	Yoga tourism	Chakrabarty & Das, 2023	Quasi-qualitative method	The study addresses an undiscovered heritage of yoga tourism paying attention to Bhakti-Yoga practiced at Mayapur in India.
5	Influence of service-scape, e-word of mouth, and satisfaction on visitors' revisit tendency to yoga spots	Pandey et al., 2023	Survey of 231 visitors	Tourists' revisit tendency towards the yoga spot, has a significant relationship with E-word of mouth and service-scape.
6	Travel motivations in yoga tourism	Ince & Keskin, 2023	Face-to-face interview	While visitors who prefer yoga tourism focus on the quality of experiences, visitors who prefer mass tourism give more essentiality to relaxation and entertainment.
7	Yoga travelers' experiences in guided tours	Atsiz et al., 2023	Qualitative-online reviews of travelers	The study identified key components of yoga travelers' experiences. Facilities and services, a sensation of astonishment, benefits, a great experience, social connection, and cultural learning.
8	Predicting yoga tourists' revisit intention	Leou & Wang, 2023	Structured questionnaire with 420 yoga tourism visitors	The behavioral attitude of yoga guests can mediate the effect of behavioral tendency via satisfaction.

9	Challenges of yoga tourism in Rajasthan	Kumari & Gwala, 2022	Interpretative and exploratory research	Yoga as a tourism product, huge possibility of Rajasthan in yoga sector, service for yoga centers and retreats, the obstacles that government should overcome such as inadequate advertisement, inadequate accommodation, price discrimination, improper safety and security, and lack of hygiene.
10	Resilience in tourism & hospitality industry	Puzari & Bhattacharjee, 2022	Interpretative, qualitative and quantitative analysis through observations, documents, surveys and telephonic interviews	How the tourism industry's effort to build resilience to recover from the COVID-19 shock is substantially influenced by external variables, including governmental actions and local belonging. The use of resilience techniques to adapt the tourism sector to the new global economic order with the aid of numerous industry innovations has been quite successful in mediating the sector's recovery from COVID-19.
11	Present scenario of Indian medical tourism	Bhaumik, 2022	Secondary data from print, internet and indexed journal articles, and books	The progress of medical tourism in India contributes to the advancement of medical knowledge, revenues, employment, and urbanization. To decrease harmful effects of medical tourism, regulations must be in place. The government should be involved in the expansion of medical tourism.
12	Empowering local communities through responsible tourism	Kumari & Mathur, 2022	Secondary data via reviewing journal articles, periodicals, newsletters, blog and website	The major difference between responsible tourism and sustainable tourism and local communities that engage in responsible tourism can reap social, socioeconomic, environmental, health, and safety benefits.
13	Factors influencing yoga tourism in Uttarakhand	Ranjan et al. 2022	Deductive approach using quantitative methods and a structured questionnaire	The study identified four variables, including strengthening, awareness, health and wellness, and tourism, which are responsible for boosting yoga. Through the Patanjali Yogpeeth, international relationships and public participation are fostered. Yoga is governed by norms, attitudes, beliefs, and definitions of the term that help to define what behaviors are desirable, suitable, or acceptable. Market segmentation, targeting, and branding are key challenges in developing yoga tourism.

14	Celebrity-induced yoga Tourism	Nair & Solanki, 2022	Qualitative interpretative approach	The results of this study add to our understanding of four key concepts in yoga tourism: 1) attachment of celebrities, 2) behavioral tendency, 3) attachment to the place, and 4) the look for authenticity. The study demonstrates that travel prompted by religious gurus is more influential than other famous people encourage.
15	Tourism and yoga	Kamthe et al. 2022	Questionnaire, observation, and literature review	No matter what their age, sex, profession, or even country of origin is, a wide range of people are eager to engage in yoga tourism. Yoga is becoming more and more popular since it has so many positive effects on people. However, there are problems that need to be fixed in India's yoga tourism industry.
16	Occasions and challenges of yoga tourism	Dhiraj & Kumar, 2021	Literature review that includes textbook reviews, encyclopedia, journal article reviews, news articles and web pages	Yoga promotes the growth of human capital, according to studies. demonstrate how yoga can assist to repair the economy by fostering positivity and reducing stress amid economic crises. India's main cultural export is yoga. When employing yoga as a growth-promoting element, a suitable direction is required for the Indian economy. India is the origin of literature and culture. The success of all tactical fronts must be a major factor in the tourism industry's success.
17	The effect of the components of yoga spot progress toward visitor satisfaction and revisit tendency	Suwaree, 2021	Quantitative approach, online survey questionnaire from yoga tourists	Owners of yoga studios and yoga instructors play a major role in the creation of tourist-friendly yoga locations. Visitors are more drawn to traditional yoga practices. Planning, developing, and strengthening tourist attractions and destinations such that they have stunning view with genuine environment suited for leisure.
18	Covid-19 effect on India's yoga tourism	Swamy & Agoramoorthy, 2021	Literature review	The COVID pandemic has caused a drastic decline in yoga tourism in India. Tourists are unhappy when they receive deplorable experiences because of unauthenticated teachers and schools, and Yoga spots for profit. To address this problem, institutional intervention is needed to ensure visitors have credible practice of Yoga.

19	Human resource development practices in Indian tourism industry	Mishra, Singh & Kumar, 2021	Qualitative research, literature review of various books, journals, blogs, publications, articles, research papers and websites	At all levels of the industry, a well-developed system of human resource development is necessary given the Indian tourist sector's rapid growth. To make India competitive on a global scale and to further accelerate its economic growth, the chapter provides a deep level of analysis for human resource development and a systematic training and development strategy that must be followed in the Indian tourist business.
20	Stress management-recognition, regimentation and restoration of organizational distress ailment	Booma, 2021	Literature review	In the current situation, many employees experience the most incredible sense of stress in their working environment. Whether the company is large or small, employee wellness plays an important role. A stress-free program can boost productivity, raise morale and lessen stress.
21	Yoga tourism	Santhumayor et al., 2021	Data collection from books, journals, reports, and magazines	India needs to update its outdated methods to compete in today's industry. India must establish a distinct market position, brand, and image that no other player can own. India can advertise itself as a center for yoga, meditation, and spirituality.
22	Medical tourism in India	Deshkukh & Waghmare, 2021	Literature review	The study aimed to understand reasons for the progress of medical tourism in India, stakeholder roles in promoting it, future prospect of medical tourism of India.
23	Yoga-scapes, embodiment and spiritual tourism	McCartney, 2020	Literature review	This study explored the concept of tourism in Yogaland, which involves physical and metaphysical journeys. Tourism within Yogaland can be both an internal and external journey, depending on people's goals and experiences.
24	Challenges and occasions of health tourism in India	Ghosh, 2020	Secondary data is used by using Trend Projection method	The cost, resource existence, guiding of the government, level of infrastructure, studies in medical science are key for the progress of medical tourism.
25	Yoga wellness tourism	Telej & Gamble, 2019	Qualitative study and interview	Different conceptions of yoga serve as the foundation for different promotional techniques; thus, interpretation of yoga tourism is important in marketing used by locations that provide yoga retreats.
26	Yoga tourism	Dillette et al., 2018	Qualitative research, literature review, interview	The outcomes of this exploratory study showed the methods through which participants in yoga retreats experience transformation and well-being. This study's goal was to determine whether and how yoga tourists can have transformative well-being experiences.

27	Yoga tourism	Alana et al., 2018	Deductive thematic analysis, Interview	Yoga tourism provides the atmosphere for yoga visitors to experience positive psychological well-being during vacation and also their post-vacation.
28	Prospects and challenges of yoga tourism	Kumar, 2017	Literature review	The success of all tactical fronts will have a significant influence on how well the tourism sector performs. India needs to update its outdated methods to compete in today's industry. India must establish a distinct market position, brand, and image that no other player can own. India Can Do It promote itself as a hub for spirituality, yoga, and meditation.
29	Health tourism in India-potential and prospects	Manju & Chandran, 2017	Literature review	People must be made aware of the importance of good hygiene and healthy habits to promote health tourism in the nation. The government should make sure that the money obtained from the health tourism sector is used for the benefit of the local populace. The establishment of welcoming working conditions and other support infrastructure will draw in new talent and stop the brain drain from the sector.
30	Influence of yoga on tourists visiting Kerala	Ambili, 2016	Primary data collection by canvassing a questionnaire. Secondary data from various sources and descriptive methodology was used	The analysis outlined the main justifications for Kerala's suitability for yoga practice as well as the amount of time that tourists spent practicing yoga. It was discovered that Kerala's traditional yoga practice is the main factor in the state's readiness for yoga practice. Beginning yoga at a young age and practicing it for longer than 1 to 5 years are two other characteristics that influence tourists' choice of Kerala as their favorite travel location.
31	Disparities in the use of yoga	Patwardhan, 2016	Literature review	Males and people from low socioeconomic classes are the most unable to practice yoga due to barriers. The yoga tourism sector has a chance to fill this gap by revising its marketing efforts to reach males and the disadvantaged, as well as government establishments and charities.
32	Yoga tourism within the wellness tourism	Lento et al. 2015	Self-administered survey	This study explores the sociodemographic and motivational traits of yoga tourists, offering insight into the expanding special-interest tourism sector. It synthesized yoga literature and used theories to explain visitor behavior.

33	Ashtanga yoga tourism and authenticity	Maddox, 2014	Literature review, participant observation	Yoga practitioners in India seek an authentic travel experience, particularly in Mysore, where they believe the yoga is more genuine than in the West. Tourists are willing to have a travel experience that matches their narrow definition of India, rejecting Western aesthetics and modernity.
34	Glocal yoga	Askegaard & Eckhardt, 2012	Observation and interview	The research identifies six different ways in which middle-class yoga customers in India comprehend glocal yoga as a fashionable discipline.
35	Yoga and sustainability	Bhagwat, 2008	Literature review	The relationship between yoga and sustainability is investigated. Ashtanga yoga has not only personal and social but also environmental and financial dimensions that will lead to a sustainable community.
36	Yoga tourism within wellness tourism	Lehto et al., 2006	Survey method	An individual's level of yoga involvement, physical health, and emotional condition contribute positively to the inclination to travel for yoga.
37	Yoga tourism in India	Liberman, 2004	Data collection from books, journals, reports, magazines, brochures and online	Yoga is the practice of learning to focus one's heart and mind on recognizing the Vasana (habitual, characterological energy patterns) that tarnish one's experience and cause one to continue to think filthy, self-centered, and short-sighted thoughts about oneself and others, and then reducing or removing those vasana. The evolution of yoga. Or, to quote Swami Gitananda, "The purpose of life is to progress." But, the majority of us are focused on declining.

Figure 2 basically presents a word cloud containing the key and most-frequently used words concerning yoga tourism in the selected studies.

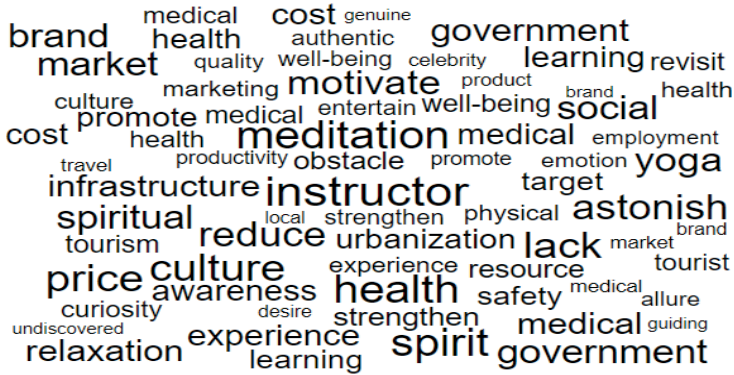


Figure 2: Keywords concerning yoga tourism in the studies

To sum up, the studies listed in Table 1 help us comprehend yoga tourism as a whole. They offer priceless insights into the variables influencing visitor behavior, the difficulties the tourism industry faces, and the possibilities for sustainable development. The study's conclusions emphasize the value of ethical behavior, local empowerment, and the possible financial benefits of yoga tourism. This information can aid stakeholders in making knowledgeable choices in this field for the last 19 years and putting into practice practical plans to promote the expansion and prosperity of the yoga tourism sector.

5. Conclusion

The exploratory study aimed to address a number of occasions and challenges of the yoga and wellness tourism industry in India by focusing on fundamental studies through a literature review technique. The study mainly revealed that yoga tourism in India faces several obstacles and issues, including a lack of advertising, poor health conditions, and safety and security problems, which influence the sustainability of the yoga tourism in the wellness market. Government guidance is also necessary for reestablishing the image of yoga-related events that will help boost the economy.

Last but not least, yoga studio owners are essential for the creation of spots for yoga. A complete yoga curriculum is necessary that incorporates other wellness applications that help transform the posture, mindset, and spirituality. Yoga professionals should provide quality services and finish their training sessions at a facility authorized by legal authorities. Secondly, the government have a key part in planning and developing tourist destinations. By this way, the visitors have lovely views with genuine environment suitable

for relaxation, positive and healthy thought. The government also have a part to play in promoting the spot as the main-attraction center of yoga tourism by using web sources and organizing yoga events. In the field of medical tourism, India has a bright future. Even though Indian health tourism faces numerous difficulties, these can be overcome by giving comprehensive explanations of the peculiarities of the Indian healthcare system. Moreover, there is a need to educate people on the importance of good cleanliness and healthy habits for the progress of health tourism in the nation. To assist the locals in this sector, the government and responsible organizations should offer enough facilities, financial support, management, and marketing techniques. Even though physical health comes first, true effectiveness in healthcare requires a deeper focus on the mind and the soul.

Limitations and future research

It is better to employ a wider range of sources and more diverse methods to collect information in future studies because this research was not prepared based on many diverse sources and only the literature review approach was used. The negative effects of tourists on the local population and how they may, voluntarily or unintentionally, alter the authenticity of that location, its customs, culture, and people are not discussed in the studies presented here. Future studies should focus on this crucial problem. The locals may become so focused on competing with foreigners that they sometimes neglect their own culture and authenticity in an effort to better the quality of services they offer to tourists and to compete with the activities of foreigners who first learned yoga and wellness in India and have now started their own workshops and classes in India. Many visitors that visit India's yoga and wellness industry have less of a focus on yoga and health and more of a desire to party and consume alcohol while they are there. In an ashram in India, a foreign tourist may create new trends for his own business and for what he has learned from the locals, and may influence the originality of that content by his stronger marketing than a local, adding elements of modernism and the contemporary world to the content they learn from local people. The foreign tourist perspective and the local perspective toward yoga tourism and concerning events can be compared and analyzed.

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