

Wellness Through Travel: Exploring Yoga as Pillar of Modern Tourism**Dr. Manisha Mukul Tyagi,**Teacher Educator,
Bombay Teachers' Training College,
drmanisha@btcc.edu**Abstract**

In recent years, yoga and meditation have emerged as powerful elements of wellness tourism. What once were deeply traditional practices are now sought-after experiences for travelers looking to rejuvenate their mind, body, and spirit. This study delves into the emerging phenomenon of yoga tourism, particularly from the perspective of students. It explores how these young individuals view yoga in terms of personal well-being, spiritual growth, self-development, and its role in improving athletic performance. With India being the birthplace of yoga, it naturally attracts those seeking authentic yoga experiences rooted in ancient wisdom. Using a quantitative approach, this study surveyed 100 students aged between 16 and 30 years to understand their perceptions across four dimensions: Yoga for Wellness, Yoga for Spiritualism, Yoga for Study, and Yoga for Sports. The findings reveal a strong awareness of the benefits of yoga tourism, though regular practice remains limited. This research offers valuable insights for educators, tourism developers, and policymakers to promote yoga tourism more effectively among youth.

Keywords: Yoga tourism, wellness, spiritualism, holistic development, student perception, India

Need for the Study

In today's fast-paced world, physical and mental wellness has become a global priority. As more people recognize the value of holistic health, yoga has taken center stage as a key component of wellness tourism. For the younger generation, especially students, managing stress, maintaining focus, and achieving balance are increasingly important. Yoga and meditation offer practical solutions to these challenges. Despite the growing awareness, there's a lack of research specifically examining how students perceive yoga and meditation as part of their travel experiences. India, with its rich cultural heritage and strong yoga traditions, is uniquely positioned to cater to this demand. This study aims to fill this gap by focusing on the perceptions of students, who represent a vital segment of future travelers and wellness seekers.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine student perceptions of yoga and meditation in the context of tourism.

2. To analyze the impact of yoga tourism on personal wellness, mental peace, and self-discovery.
3. To understand attitudes toward yoga tourism as a recreational, spiritual, and fitness-enhancing activity.
4. To evaluate the role of yoga and meditation in improving the performance and well-being of sportspersons.

Review of Related Literature

Yoga tourism is a specialized form of wellness tourism that combines travel with the goal of improving health and well-being through ancient yogic practices. Smith and Kelly (2006) defined wellness tourism as travel with the purpose of promoting physical and mental health. According to Cohen and Bodeker (2008), yoga tourism caters to spiritual, physical, and mental needs and has gained popularity as travelers seek deeper, more meaningful experiences. Khalsa (2010) emphasized yoga's therapeutic benefits, especially in promoting mental health and emotional balance.

Lehto and Brown (2009) observed that yoga retreats also offer an opportunity for digital detox

and mindfulness, attracting individuals who want to escape the stress of modern life. Sridhar (2015) noted that India, being the birthplace of yoga, holds a special attraction for international yoga tourists looking for authentic experiences. Despite these developments, student perceptions remain underexplored, especially within the Indian context.

Research Methodology

- **Method:** Descriptive Survey
- **Population:** Students aged 16–30 from colleges of South Mumbai
- **Sample Size:** 100 students (75% aged 21–25, 17% aged 25–30, and 9.4% aged 16–21)
- **Sampling Technique:** Purposive Sampling
- **Tool:** Structured Questionnaire (Five-Point Rating Scale) developed by the researcher, focusing on four dimensions: Yoga for Wellness (mental health, lifestyle, stress reduction) Yoga for Spiritualism (inner peace, self-realization, traditional roots) Yoga for Study (focus, memory, discipline) Yoga for Sports (performance, agility, injury recovery)

Findings and Interpretation

1. Yoga for Wellness

- 60.9% of youth do not regularly practice yoga, 25% practice monthly, and only 9.4% practice weekly.
- 79.7% are willing to spend between ₹5,000–10,000 on yoga tourism.
- A majority (88.4%) agree that achieving good health during holidays is valuable.
- 58.3% support the idea that a yogic diet promotes health.
- 48.3% believe that dedicating time to oneself through yoga tourism is important.

Students from various academic backgrounds recognize the wellness benefits of yoga, even if their personal involvement is low. This suggests that although yoga's value is acknowledged, actual participation is limited by lifestyle pressures or academic commitments. Students view wellness not just as physical health, but also as mental peace and balance. This highlights the need for yoga tourism packages tailored to student lifestyles.

2. Yoga for Spiritualism

- 40% view yoga tourism as a journey combining peace, spirituality, physical health, and personal growth.
- 83.3% believe yoga helps individuals look inward.
- 90.4% feel that yoga tourism helps explore yogic roots.
- 65% say yoga tourism supports self-care and inner well-being.
- However, only 40% accept that yoga adheres to spiritual laws; 60% remain neutral.

Students interpret spirituality in different ways based on their academic backgrounds. Humanities students might associate spiritualism with identity and philosophy, while science or business students may see it as clarity and mindfulness. The general reluctance to embrace yoga as a strictly spiritual system suggests a modern, secular view of yoga. Educational components in yoga tourism could help bridge this gap.

3. Yoga for Study

- 80% agree that youth are increasingly drawn to yogic knowledge.
- 55% find yoga studies fulfilling and life-enhancing.
- 48.3% agree that yoga tourism involves yogic learning.
- The media plays a strong role, with 85% agreeing that it promotes yoga tourism.
- 45% acknowledge a tradition of traveling for health and wellness.

Students value yoga as more than a physical practice; they see it as intellectual enrichment. Disciplines like psychology or health sciences relate to its cognitive and emotional benefits, while creative fields see it as a tool for focus and inspiration. The media's strong influence underscores the need for youth-focused, informative campaigns.

4. Yoga for Sports

- 85% agree that yoga supports athletic physique.
- 56.7% say it enhances focus and agility.
- 40% believe it prevents injuries.

- 56.7% feel yoga tourism supports athletic development.
- Opinions are mixed on yoga as a sport; 26.7% agree, 38.7% are neutral.
- 46.7% strongly reject the notion that yoga is a religion.

Yoga is widely accepted as a physical training tool even by students outside the field of sports. Students across disciplines whether in tech, commerce, or humanities acknowledge its benefits for flexibility, balance, and recovery. The secular understanding of yoga among youth makes it more accessible.

Discussion:

The findings show a broad-based recognition of yoga's benefits for wellness, learning, and performance. While awareness is high, the actual practice remains relatively low. This indicates a gap between intent and action, likely due to time constraints, lack of access, or prioritization of academics. Yoga tourism presents an opportunity to address these gaps by offering structured, short-term retreats that cater to the youth's needs. Students are drawn to yoga tourism for peace, self-exploration, and fitness. The influence of media is significant, pointing to the potential of online campaigns. Budget-friendly, socially engaging, and academically mindful yoga tourism packages could increase participation. Importantly, students do not view yoga as a religion, which may help dispel myths and encourage broader participation. The idea that yoga is a sport or recreational activity also has scope for growth.

Significance of the Study :

This research provides a valuable bridge between theoretical concepts of wellness tourism and the actual perceptions of young people. It highlights the untapped potential of youth as promoters of India's yoga heritage. By aligning yoga tourism with student needs and preferences, tourism boards, educators, and policymakers can foster global engagement, promote sustainable travel, and enhance India's cultural soft power.

Ethical Considerations

- Approval was obtained from the institutional ethics board.
- Participants were informed about the purpose of the study.
- Consent was obtained, and confidentiality was maintained.
- Participants had the right to withdraw at any time.

Conclusion

Yoga and meditation have moved beyond traditional boundaries to become central to modern wellness tourism. For today's youth, they offer much-needed tools for balance, clarity, and strength. India, as the birthplace of yoga, remains a beacon for authentic yoga tourism. While young people are interested, structured efforts are needed to convert awareness into participation. This study underscores the importance of making yoga tourism youth-friendly, inclusive, and accessible.

References

1. Cohen, M., & Bodeker, G. (2008). Understanding the global spa industry: Spa management. Butterworth-Heinemann.
2. Desikachar, T. K. V. (1995). The heart of yoga: Developing a personal practice. Inner Traditions International.
3. Eliade, M. (1958). Yoga: Immortality and freedom. Princeton University Press.
4. Iyengar, B. K. S. (1966). Light on yoga. George Allen & Unwin.
5. Khalsa, S. B. S. (2010). Yoga for psychiatry and mental health: An ancient practice with modern relevance. Indian Journal of Psychiatry, 52(Suppl1), S334.
6. Lehto, X. Y., & Brown, S. C. (2009). Enhancing academic learning and global engagement through a short-term international service-learning program. Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education, 8(3), 1-10.
7. Smith, M., & Kelly, C. (2006). Wellness tourism. Tourism Recreation Research, 31(1), 1-4.
8. Sridhar, M. (2015). Yoga tourism in India: A growing trend in wellness travel. Journal of Tourism Research & Hospitality, 4(2), 1-5.