

## YOGA-TOURISM AS A PERSPECTIVE DIRECTION ON THE HEALTH TOURISM MARKET OF RUSSIA

Marina V. MALYGINA

### **Abstract**

*The process of urbanization is currently growing in connection with the increasing share of technology influence on the life of modern man. The number of stressful situations increases. One of the ways out is yoga-tourism. This paper presents the socio-demographic and motivational characteristics of yoga tourists, evidence that the level of enthusiasm for yoga, the state of physical health, and mental well-being depends on the development of yoga tourism. The received data bear practical significance for tour operators and development of the tourist market. This study provides the basis for future research on yoga-tourism.*

### **Keywords**

*Yoga, yoga-tourism, health, health tourism.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Despite the growing popularity in recent years, yoga can hardly be called a modern phenomenon. It is the basis of ancient Indian culture and has been practiced for more than 5000 thousand years. As an activity, yoga has become one of the fastest growing occupations. It is not a religion and is intended for individual growth of physical, emotional, intellectual indices. The stress and stress of a modern urban citizen led to a search for a more holistic approach to existence. Yoga is one of the responses of a person to a fast-paced lifestyle (Havitz, Dimanche, 2007)

Health tourism is a kind of both individual and group recreation, implying the passage of certain restorative and medical procedures. Yoga tourism can be considered as a type of health tourism. Yoga helps reduce stress, improve

breathing, develop strength and flexibility. For many people, yoga has become a central tool in their quest for a balanced life (Das, Mohapatra, et al., 2007).

Yoga-tourism is a relatively new concept in the world, scientific research in this area is at an early stage in Russia. The lack of information made the development of this market very difficult. There is a need for a scientific justification for yoga tourism in Russian studies (Baloglu, McCleary, 1999). Ivanova (2014) states that majority of people practicing yoga in Russia believe that yoga started its way in Russia with opening of modern clubs or popular fitness centres, and have no idea that there was, for example, the Yoga Association of the USSR. Yoga was spreading in the Russian Empire and the USSR until the 1970s, when all the oriental practices were banned in the Soviet Union. However, in spite of that thousands of

people in different regions of the country went on practicing yoga, and yogic life brimmed with a variety of events. Russian people were interested in yoga even before the revolution of 1917. In the Soviet era it was not safe to practice yoga because it was ideologically forbidden, but nevertheless there were enthusiasts who learned and mastered yogic techniques with the help of few remaining books and samizdat (underground press) copies. For example Boris Leonidovich Smirnov (1891 — 1967) was a well-known doctor and an expert in foreign languages. As a youth he was fond of oriental philosophy. After giving a lecture on thought transfer in Kiev in 1930 he was exiled for a few years to Yoshkar Ola. In the evening of his life, when seriously ill and resigned, he translated Mahabharata into Russian. The quality of his translation is highly appreciated by experts around world.

The development of tourism is accompanied by a variety of ways to motivate the tourist and competition among similar products. Traveling for better health has long been a motive for travel. Early forms of health tourism go back to 2000 thousand years BC. e. In India, Greece and Persia, there were physicians trained in therapeutic values. Mineral baths and spa centers in England, Baden-Baden and Vichy were the most famous places and remain popular now. We witnessed the revival of health tourism as a result of physical, moral and spiritual damage caused by the modern way of life. Escape from the urban environment has become one of the main motivating forces in the field of tourism. The tourism industry stands for a healthy, holistic kind of recreation. Health tourism is historically

present in the tourist sphere (Lehto, , Brown, Chen, Morrison, 2006).

Yoga takes a significant place in public life. Yoga tourism is considered as a subcategory of health tourism, as they share the common functional characteristics of tourist motivations and social values that enhance the quality of life of an individual and include outdoor activities. Good state of health depends on the physical and mental state. Wellness elements include exercise, proper nutrition, the use of vitamins. Moreover, today's consumer wants to look and feel better, reduce weight, slow the aging process, relieve pain and discomfort, cope with stress, or take part in using natural supplements (vitamins and minerals to improve health). These elements are the main factors of health tourism, motivating yoga tourists. In addition, yoga-tourism has oriental medicinal practices (Smith, Puczkó, 2009).

## **2 OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTION**

The main objective of the presented study was to analyse the socio-demographic and motivational characteristics of yoga tourist. The next objective was to analyse motivation aspects of individuals travelling in frame of yoga tourism.

The main research question is formulated: “Is it evidence that the level of enthusiasm for yoga, the state of physical health, and mental well-being depends on the development of yoga tourism?”

### 3 METHODS

From the point of view of methodology we choose the tool of the Investigation Pentagon to solve the phenomena yoga and tourism. In concrete we used methods of analysis, synthesis, induction and deduction and applied anchored theory method, as well as causal and operational thinking. Continuously in the process of solving the project, the authors took into account the hysteresis, where the study of social phenomena emphasizes the importance of historical contexts for the study of current phenomena and their prediction in the future.

The relevance of research question of the presented study was analysed as the main distinctive point between deductive and inductive approaches. We provided a deductive approach test of the validity of assumptions in the context of the research question, whereas inductive approach contributed to the predictions and generalizations for Russian milieu.

### 5 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on studies conducted by the Moscow University of Yoga, we found out that most yoga tourists are women aged 40-45 with incomes above the average. As a rule, for yoga trips, the choice falls either to places that are near the house, or to coastal countries with a warm climate. Important motivation is considered for employment (Aggarwal, Guglani, Goel, 2008). Practitioners of yoga note that yoga brings them spirituality, physical and mental health, as well as emotional balance. People feel the joy of cooperating

with people who share similar interests. Yoga-travel can reduce pain and have a calming effect on the participants. Such trips seem incredibly useful. Busy working people perceive them as contributing to a balanced life. Yoga tourism depicts the phenomenon most similar to health tourism (Chopra, Simon, 2004).

Programs in the field of health and health tourism serve to help people maintain a sense of well-being, to find meaning and purpose in life, combining health and well-being through travel. This can also be achieved with the help of yoga tourism programs.

Yoga-tourists are mostly physically healthy, which can be attributed to the merits of their regular practice. Many people turn to yoga in search of inner peace or, at least, calmness. But often this is not enough, and more and more practitioners want to spend the long-awaited vacation doing yoga to deal with the consequences of a sixty-hour work week and chronic multi-tasking. The main advantage of yoga tourism is the ability to communicate with people with similar interests and mutual support. As for the destination for trips, yoga-tourists are happy to visit a sunny place, ideally with a beach or a pond nearby. This is of great importance for tour operators serving and oriented to this direction in the market (Dixit, 2005).

Like fitness centres, many hotels and resorts cannot do without yoga. Yoga classes appeared in Hyatts and Marriotts. In the "Kimpton" mats and belts for yoga are available for guests who ask them. Resorts began to make their own programs, to conduct weekly yoga retreats. Now that yoga has become so popular, hotels are looking for new ways to include it in their

list of services and cause interest in the guests. People want to be able to relieve stress Gelter, 2008).

According to the leading Russian research company TNS Russia, in the second half of 2014, 1.37 million of the adult urban population of Russia were engaged in yoga. This is a fairly large audience of consumers, which could serve as a basis for the development of yoga tourism in Russia. The age of practitioners in Russia: 54% - from 16 to 34; 32% - from 35 to 54 years; 14% are over 55. 84% of practitioners are women with average income or higher than average income. The greatest demand for yoga tours is available in Moscow. The resources of the Krasnodar Territory and the Republic of Crimea are excellent for holding such tours. At the Russian Black Sea resorts there are those values that motivate yoga tourists: a warm climate, a lot of sunny days, the presence of the sea and mountains. The development of health tourism is an important component of the social policy of the state, ensuring the implementation of humanistic ideals, values and norms that open wide scope for revealing people's abilities, satisfaction of their interests and needs, and strengthening human potential.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

The Russian Federation has all the necessary resources for the development of this type of tourism, which we must use to improve the quality of life of Russians. As it is declared in the Russian websites of Yoga Tourism (<https://www.foto-rossiya.ru/en/Yoga-tourism>) many people have started to think about what to start yoga, what is the

benefit of this sport, how to translate the idea into reality. Main motivation aspects yoga tourism create health benefits of yoga, especially impact of yoga on the body as flexibility improvement, what helps to develop psychic and social abilities and achieve great results. Thanks trained body and spirit, human immunity is also developed and prevention of civilization disease as well, for example positive results were analysed in people suffered from arthritis, back pain, metabolism problems. Yoga tourism promotes strength and flexibility and all together improve body posture, physical and psychic condition. For yoga tourism is typical to take place away from the bustle, noise, closer to the wild, clean waters and pleasant sounds of nature, fresh air, where each participant gets in the end a balanced state of mind, a change of everyday environment and good rest. Thus, in conclusion we want to note that yoga-tourism is one of the most promising directions for increasing the level of health of the population of Russia.

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## 7 CONTACTS

Assoc. Prof. Marina V. Malygina, PhD.  
Siberian State University of Physical  
Education and Sports  
Omsk, Russia  
E-mail: [marija-72@mail.ru](mailto:marija-72@mail.ru)