



A Wide Thought On The Impact Of Spiritual Tourism In India

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Abstract

Religion is one of the things that brings in a lot of tourists from all over the world every year. The religious journey is another thing that can help one to feel calm and happy inside. These kinds of interactions within the travel can lead to deep spiritual experiences and spiritual growth that can change a person's life. Spiritual tourism also encourages to respect other religions and maintain communal harmony, cultural exchange and conversation, which stand as the back bone for building blocks of mutual understanding, tolerance, and respect. This kind of travel promotes social sustainability. First and foremost, sustainability requires that local customs, spiritual values, and rich cultural heritage of visited sites be recognized and kept, and that host communities directly benefit from tourist growth. Along with economic and environmental concerns, it is important that decision-makers and business leaders give more weight to the social and cultural aspects of tourism, especially on spiritual tourism. This paper talks on about how spirituality can help one to live in a healthy life and stop social crime. It also attempts how the responsible and sustainable use of natural and cultural assets in the development of spiritual tourism can create jobs, generate economic prosperity, reduce poverty, stop people leaving from rural areas, encourage product diversification, and give people a sense of pride in their community, with a focus on Rishikesh.

Keywords: spiritual tourism, sustainability, economic generation, destination, tourism marketing.

Introduction

India has been getting a lot of spiritual tourists from other countries who want to fill divine blessings and inspiration by going to spiritual places in India. There haven't much research into what really makes a person to go on a spiritual journey, but researchers also need to look into problems that might come up with such a choice. Donations go into the shrine's bank account, where they must be used to make spiritual tourists' trips and experiences better. But not much has been said about how administration can make the pilgrimage experience better. Spiritual tourism research is exploratory, so it's important to know how pilgrims act in a number of ways. So, a qualitative study is more appropriate. Practical answers to the above-mentioned areas that haven't been studied enough will be found through empirical and qualitative research that looks at the real experiences of pilgrims. Most

previous research has been more theoretical in nature.

The tourism industry has undergone unprecedented expansion and transformation over the past few decades, making it the world's fastest-growing economic sector. Travel and tourism are now massive industries in many parts of the world. It has grown into a major industry that contributes significantly to global GDP and employs millions of people. Almost every nation is concentrating on encouraging tourism and developing strategies to attract various types of visitors due to the lucrative potential of the business including those who come from other countries- international tourists and those who stay in their own country- domestic tourists.

Tourism has many sided benefits and goals for its growth and continuity. It booms to light a lot of real and abstract things that have effects on the economy, the

environment, and culture. The 21st century is the age of tourism, which is the best way to get famous, rich, and well-known. For the tourism industry to be successful, it needs to be able to notice and adapt to changes in a wide range of behavioural and technical elements and how they work together.

There has been a rise in interest in the study of spirituality in academic and professional circles in recent years. Because of this, there is now something termed "spiritual tourism" in the travel industry. Spiritual tourism, often known as "religious heritage tourism," encompasses all religions, religious landmarks, personal connections to these locations, and tourist infrastructure. Pilgrimage tourism is similar to ecotourism in that its participants aren't seeking comfort but rather challenging journeys to a spiritual destination or a more rustic way of life. Although the word is relatively recent, spiritual tourism has been around for quite some time. Scholars from all around the world have recently been delving into the concept of "spiritual tourism." This burgeoning attention isn't being driven by any sort of spiritual conviction, but rather by the fact that the sector has the potential to become the industry's most lucrative one. This article draws on previous literature to examine the blooming of the study of spiritual tourism. We provide a brief overview of the relevant literature.

The environment of the leisure and tourism industry has changed a lot because of changing consumer expectations, political factors, and the rapid growth of information technology. The change from long trips to short vacations in mature markets has made it more important for source countries to have much fun to experience. Long, high-yield vacations with a focus on learning, spiritual, wellness, or other forms of deliberate self-improvement are another growing trend. The increasing interest in natural resource management as a means of coping with disasters and tragedies, along with the preservation of cultural heritage and the emphasis on spirituality, and the willingness of local people to boost tourism on a regional level, are all tremendous assets. Spiritual tourism would unquestionably be beneficial to the economy. A common goal of health tourists is to get away from their usual routine and focus on oneself, therefore their chosen destination is often a new and exotic location. Discovering oneself can be

aided by associating with a "community" of like-minded people.

Literature Review

The tourism industry's final product, a tourist destination, is typically somewhat involved. It consists of the land itself, as well as the buildings and other physical structures within it, the people who work in those buildings, the services they provide, and the traditions to which they adhere (McIntosh and Goelden, 1990; Inskip, 1991; Kim, 1998). The vast majority of tourism studies have concentrated on developing conceptual frameworks for portraying travel destinations. To a non-resident, a state is viewed much like a popular vacation spot (Hunt, 1975). In this sense, it is similar to the image that forms in the mind of a potential tourist after they have taken in just a few of the many stimuli presented to them (Fakeye and Crompton, 1991).

Singh and Sharma (2013) talk about the business opportunities for merchants around BrahmSarovar, which is in Kurukshetra, one of the sacred towns in this state. They said that tourism is good for local merchants' businesses and even for the culture of this place.

Also on the rise is tourism that doesn't hurt the environment (Jackowski & Smith, 1992). Religion has been around for as long as people have travelled for religious reasons. Some experts say that it was the first kind of tourism (Terzidou, 2010). Usually, the goal of a religious journey is to find the truth, and sometimes inner peace and convictions as well (Vukoni, 1996: 80). Religion is also one of the most important things to think about when deciding where to go on a pilgrimage. Tourists and pilgrims are the two main types of travellers. Pilgrims have more reasons to visit holy places in these situations, while tourists have more reasons to visit places for fun or culture (Nyaupane, Timothy & Poudel 2015).

According to Barber (1991), a pilgrimage is "a trip to a holy place that is based on religious beliefs and is made for spiritual goals and inner understanding" (p. 1). Wiltshier (2011) says that "religious tourism" is the way that religious sites meet the needs of tourists (p. 251). Norman (2011) said that spiritual tourism is "tourism with a self-aware goal of spiritual improvement" (p. 20). In their study, Jutla (2002) looked at what pilgrimage means to the Sikh people. He says that a pilgrimage is a religious or spiritual trip that

is important to most religions around the world (p. 65). Gupta (1999) says that more than 9.3 million religious people go to Haridwar and Rishikesh every year. These cities are in the mountainous areas of Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, respectively. Devereux and Carnegie (2006) looked at how the experience of pilgrimage might lead to long-term change and happiness for both the individual and the community. They noticed that people with religious experiences, compared to those without, said that even though the trip can be hard at times, it makes them healthier and happier and helps them learn new things that they can use in their everyday lives.

Pandya (2015) looked at how regularly worshipping Mata Vaishno Devi and going on difficult pilgrimages could affect happiness and mental health.

Findings show that worshipping Mata Vaishno Devi and going on a pilgrimage once a year gives worshippers good health and happiness. Okumus et al. (2015) looked into how religious tourism in India helps people be more accepting of other religions.

It's a person's beliefs, thoughts, and observations about a location (Crompton, 1979). A tourist site's attributes have been studied to determine their desirability (Gearing, 1974; Ritchie and Jins, 1978; Tang and Rochananond, 1990). Some studies claim a tourist destination's image is based on people's sentiments, beliefs, and views about how well a place meets their requirements (Hu and Ritchie, 1993). Recent research on a tourism destination's image takes a multi-attribute, holistic approach (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Choi, 1999; Beerli and Martin, 2004). Because of advertising, visitors are interested in a tourist destination's primary features and support services. This makes a good impression on visitors (Un and Crompton, 1990; Fakeye and Crompton, 1991; Gartner, 1993; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Beerli and Martin, 2004).

Some of the famous Spiritual Places in our Country

Important and well-known Spiritual Associations, or Ashrams, all over the country teach yoga, meditation, and Ayurveda. The change from religious tourism to spiritual tourism relies heavily on spiritual tourist hotspots for both international and domestic visitors. These organisations and ashrams not only make it easier for tourists

to get to the heart of spirituality, but they also give them a sense of life.

Here are some well-known spiritual centres, ashrams, and groups:

1. Isha Foundation (Coimbatore)
2. Spiritual community Sri Aurobindo Ashram (Pondicherry)
3. 'Ananda Ashram' (Kanhangad, Kerala).
4. YoganandaSatsang (Ranchi Jharkhand)
5. Auroville (Pondicherry)
6. Ramana Ashram (Tiruvanmalai).
7. ISKON, (Mayapur, West Bengal)
8. Sri SatyaSai Baba, PrasanthiNilayam(Puttaparthi, Andhra Pradesh)
9. "The Art of Living Institute" (Bengaluru, Karnataka)
10. Pyramid Valley (Bengaluru, Karnataka)
11. Chidananda Hermitage Shanti Ashram, (Puri, Odisha)
12. Shanti Ashram, (Shankhavaram, Andhra Pradesh)
13. Ramakrishna Mission of Belur Math (Kolkata, West Bengal)
14. BramhaKumaris (Mount Abu, Rajasthan)
15. PatanjaliYogpeeth (Uttarakhand)
16. In (Deoghar, Jharkhand) you'll find the Sri Thakur Anukula Chandra Asharam
17. Shivananda Ashram (Divine Life Society)(Uttarakhand)
18. VedNiketan(Uttarakhand)

A Maharishi Mahesh Yogi Transcendental Meditation Headquarters (Uttarakhand)

Most well-known spiritual groups and organisations do different kinds of yoga and meditation, and they also host a lot of conferences and religious and spiritual events, like the Ganga Aarti at sunrise and sunset. Thousands of tourists go there to get physiotherapy and other Ayurvedic treatments (Sharma & Agarwal, 2016). Spiritual bodies' spiritual activities draw not only religious tourists, but also spiritual expeditors who have unplanned needs and wants for their lives and pleasure.

Research Objective

Our research emphasises to cover the following points:

- To investigate the reasons why international visitors visit ashrams.
- To examine the experience of international visitors.
- To increase understanding on spiritual tourism.
- To comprehend the entire impacts on it.

Research Methodology

The methods for this paper support from secondary data, recent articles on spiritual tourism, and recent works of fiction and poetry.

Here are the three main things that make spiritual tourism so appealing:

An ashram is, at its most basic level, a religious retreat that is often deep in the woods. Usually, people who live in an ashram do things like yoga, music, and meditation.

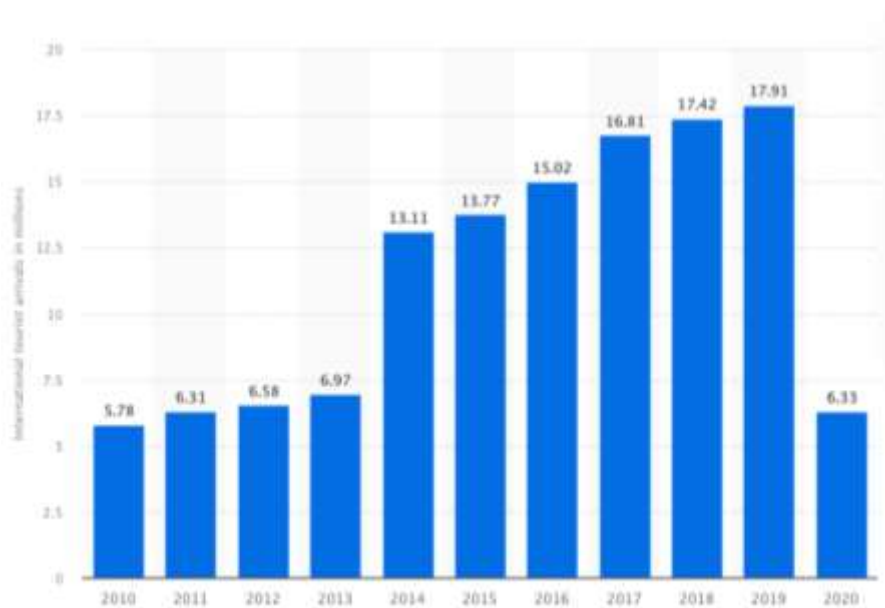
The guru's position may vary from one tradition to the next, but across the board, they enjoy widespread recognition and esteem. One more thing: you can be a devotee

of a guru without ever setting foot in an ashram.

The "asanas" (poses) are only a small part of these suggestions. Yoga is a way of life that gives rules for how to act and what to believe. Yoga comes from the Vedas and Hinduism, but people of other religions have taken it up as well.

Economic impact

People from other countries have come here with different ideas. One of the most important reasons is what we're going to talk about, which is religious and spiritual tourism. Here is information from the Indian government about the number of foreign tourists.



Number of international tourists in India from 2010 to 2020 (Millions)

Tourism has played a significant role in the development and maintenance of the economy of this new state. Most of Uttarakhand's rural communities have seen significant economic growth and new job opportunities thanks to the state's tourist industry (Rishikesh is one of them). In Rishikesh, locals can make a living providing a variety of services to visitors. The majority of the 19.2 percent of international visitors who came to Rishikesh for religious or spiritual reasons were interested in the city because of its proximity to religious sites, while 21.9 percent were interested in it because of its health and yoga offerings. As for domestic tourists, 44.2% were on pilgrimage or religious errands, while 43.6%

were on holiday or visiting the sites. The average Indian's strong spiritual convictions may be behind the recent surge in domestic spiritual tourism. In 2007, over 21% of all international visitors came to the state for religious purposes. The table shows that both the overall number of visits and the number of ethereal visitors have increased. Tourist numbers in Rishikesh increased dramatically from 2009 to 2010, however the total number of visitors over the preceding nine years varied widely. It would be financially beneficial for the state to boost the number of spiritual tourists that visit by implementing various programmes that promote and encourage them to do so.

Most Religious Stakeholders live in Rishikesh or are drawn there because of its spirituality.

Ashrams: Numerous large organisations, such the Divine Life Society and the Swarg ashram, are managed by trusts. Besides propagating the spiritual word, they help others by opening hospitals and distributing kutirs.

Rishikesh is home to numerous temples dedicated to various deities. Neelkanth Temple, located in Rajaji National Park, and SatyanarayanMandir, located close to LaxmanJhula, are only two such examples. You can visit the famous Sikh Guradwara of Hemkund Sahib on the way to or from Rishikesh. This means it's an opportunity for individuals of all religions to interact with one another. Kutirs: Bigger groups, like Swarg Ashram on the left bank, rent small huts to saints so they can meditate there.

Pilgrims: The Char DhamYatra, which attracts visitors from all over the world, begins at Rishikesh. Many Hindus long to take a dip in the Ganges in the hope that doing so will cleanse them of their sins.

Cultural:

Numerous jewellery and gemstone stores line the streets of Rishikesh, selling items adorned with amber, amethyst, crystal, sapphire, rudraksha, and other stones having spiritual significance. Since so many people visit, it's a wonderful site to market items imported from other nations.

Wooden statuettes and artisanal goods abound in the shops in Rishikesh. The use of children in the production of wooden toys, beads, bracelets, and other items. Those foreign countries supply the wood. There are a number of stores where travellers can buy books about religion and spirituality. Religious Items and Ganges Water - Many stores sell incense and plants that are very important to different cultures. Ganges water is also for sale. It costs Rs. 5 per litre.

Yoga: There are many yoga teachers and schools, as well as many spas that offer traditional treatments like ayurveda and herbal massages.

Tourist:

Transportation: Jeeps, taxis, ferries, buses, tempos, and motorboats are all available for locals and tourists to get around. Between LaxmanJhula and Neelkanth Temple, where Rajaji National Park is, 8 to 10 people ride in Jeeps through the park. There are no

pollution checks on these jeeps, and they are often very loud.

Their drivers aren't well-trained and drive very dangerously on the mountain roads, putting their lives and the lives of their passengers in danger. Taxis are always interstate, and people

continue to come to Rishikesh from bigger towns. Ferries and motorboats are just for tourists and are mostly used to enjoy being on the water, while speedboats are for people with a lot of money who want to go fast. Buses run in the city, but most of the time they connect people to the rest of the world. Tempos go up and down the right bank road. Most people who are in a hurry use them to get from Ram Jhula to LaxmanJhula. The government is in charge of ferries and jeeps, and seats are given out instead of being reserved. These two kinds of transportation are made to carry a lot of people at once.

Many of Rishikesh's travel agencies promote the same activities—hiking in the Himalayas, rafting and kayaking the Ganges, and camping near the water. It's a buyer's market, with more than 50 establishments vying for the same pool of customers.

Rishikesh is full of restaurants that serve many different kinds of food. Their main thing is that they are all vegetarians because of their religion. Also, because so many people come from other countries, restaurants now serve Mexican, Italian, Israeli, and German food.

Compared to North Indian and South Indian food, this food is quite expensive, but people from bigger cities will find it very cheap overall. Some restaurants, like the Tip Top Restaurant, send their chefs to Goa to learn new skills so they can offer more kinds of food.

Tourists and pilgrims can choose where to stay from hotels, spas, guesthouses, and ashrams. There are many places to stay in Rishikesh, depends on one's intended purpose for being there. These might range from luxurious to extremely affordable.

Tourists who travel Rishikesh may have the most visitors per person in India, with the possible exception of Goa. Yoga and spirituality are practised by many people from other countries, including people from the United States, China, the United Kingdom, Spain, Germany, and many more nations. There are two beaches on the left bank, between LaxmanJhula and Ram Jhula. In their free time, people from other nations

like soaking up the sun and splashing around in the sea. They also enjoy visiting Rishikesh's many spas and wellness centres.

Cyber Cafes: There are a lot of Cyber Cafes in Rishikesh to help travellers from other countries and from India. They have high-speed Internet access that isn't too slow and are very well-equipped.

The governing body is called GarhwalMangal. The Indian state of Uttarakhand has an organisation called Vikas Nigam that is in charge of promoting tourism. It plays a crucial role in Rishikesh because of the policies that it sets for the city's thriving tourism industry. For the benefit of visitors and the development of the tourism business, it licences bed-and-breakfasts, issues rafting and paragliding permits, and constructs necessary infrastructure. Also investigated is the reception given to guests.

The public waterworks agency in Rishikesh takes water from the Ganges, cleans it, and gives it to people who live there.

In addition to marketing their products and services, marketers and federal and state governments should collaborate to attract new commercial activity and new employment opportunities. The government should reach out to local companies for assistance in establishing transportation, water and sanitation, energy, and other essential services in order to accommodate the enormous number of pilgrims and ensure their comfort.

1) Positive Influences

Chances for women, hiring locals in different parts of the tourism industry, and making more jobs available. Tourism opens up new ways for businesses to make money and brings new money into a community. Spending by tourists; the money needed to run and maintain tourist attractions comes from what tourists spend. These costs give local governments a way to make money (e.g. parking fees, tourism taxes, etc.).

Scale Structure: Because of the spending habits of tourists, businesses in unrelated fields benefit from increased sales and employment opportunities. To put it another way, this aids the expansion and recovery of the regional economy.

2) Adverse Effects

A municipality's budget may be greatly affected by how much it costs to clean, pick up trash, dispose of water, light, market, and promote. Real estate prices go up; property

and home prices go up, there is more competition for land use, and the city's poor are sometimes forced to move. Price increases in general; retailers and suppliers raise the prices of goods and services; separation of residents and tourists; or the creation of gentrified ghettos.

Conclusion

In search of spirituality, many visitors come from various countries to ours. Some of the most crucial aspects of spiritual tourism are examined in this study. The most crucial ones are the facts that tourists from other countries aren't looking for five-star accommodations but rather challenging hikes to accomplish a spiritual purpose or a simpler existence, and that travel-facilitating technology is increasingly popular. A comprehensive market research campaign needs to be launched in the target source markets, and then tourist goods need to be crafted to appeal to the specific preferences of each target market. There needs to be constant and efficient market representation for the travel industry in each source market, as well as a multilingual information hub accessible online. India should be advertised as a place to go for yoga and spirituality. To get people from all over the world to come, different plans should be used. Rishikesh could become a major spiritual tourist destination because it has so many great things to do for tourists. Domestic tourists are more likely to visit the city if it has spiritual landmarks. In recent years, the general public's view of spirituality has changed, which has led to a huge rise in the number of spiritual travellers. No research has been done on how spiritual tourism is marketed or how it works.

Infrastructure has been said to be one of the most important things to consider when marketing spiritual tourism. There are many things that attract tourists, like fairs and festivals, handicrafts, good transportation, and places to stay. However, these things are not as important in Rishikesh as they used to be. It should be a key part of spiritual tourism and fit in with it. People from other countries come to Rishikesh to experience divine spirituality and to find themselves. All international travellers to Rishikesh love the temple, the river, the quiet surroundings, and how clean the hotel rooms are. Even though they were mostly happy with their trip to Rishikesh, there is still a big

difference between what they expected and what they got.

People have pointed to the bad conditions of shared buses and taxis between tourist spots, the lack of maintenance on city and rural roads, traffic jams, and the lack of cleanliness in Rishikesh restaurants as reasons for this difference. Based on this finding, suggestions have been made for how to close the gap. This may result in an increase in the number of visitors visiting Uttaranchal. This research, which was based on a case study, found information about different spiritual activity centres in Rishikesh that will help with the development of ways to manage tourists. Rishikesh needs to modernise its approach to marketing to tourists from the antiquated methods it now employs. In order to succeed in the market, it must have a reputation, identity, and brand that no other company can match. You may promote Rishikesh as a destination for yogis and meditators. Tourists, especially those who are travelling to India to practise yoga and discover their spirituality, have a lot to gain by visiting places like Rishikesh, which was once renowned as the yoga centre of the world.

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