

The Utility of Yoga and Buddhist Practices in Sri Lanka's Wellness and Spiritual Tourism

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Abstract

The Yoga and Buddhist meditation practices utilized in the Sri Lankan wellness and meditation retreats majorly affect the destination preference. Consequently, utilization of the new and demanding wellness practices is essential for the sustainability of wellness and spiritual tourism in Sri Lanka. Therefore, this study has explored the spectrum of the Yoga and Buddhist practices utilized in Sri Lanka's wellness and spiritual tourism. Sri Lanka wellness retreats utilize Yoga and Buddhist meditation practices as alternative interventions. Meditation retreats exposure to the Buddhist practices is narrow. However, a vast variety of yoga practices are offered by foreign yoga teachers. Therefore, developing the capabilities of local yoga teachers and promoting a variety of Buddhist meditation practices is essential for the sustainability of Sri Lanka's wellness spiritual and meditation tourism industry.

Keywords: *Buddhism, Spiritual Tourism, Sri Lanka Tourism, Wellness Tourism, Yoga*

Introduction

The need for human well-being is presently transformed as a journey of holistic health and self-discovery facilitated through wellness and spiritual tourism (Kazakov & Oyner, 2021). Complementary and alternative interventions of Yoga are utilized as mind and body interventions (Majeed& Javed, 2017). Spiritual and meditation retreats majorly utilized Buddhist meditation practices for self-exploration (Norman, 2012). Sri Lanka's wellness tourism also offers Yoga and Buddhist meditation practices (SEDB, 2018). However, there is a growing demand for the development of wellness and spiritual tourism in Sri Lanka but the utility of the above practices is less. Therefore, this study explores the spectrum of utility in Yoga and Buddhist Meditation practices in Sri Lanka wellness and spiritual and meditation retreats in comparison to the global industry. To sustain Sri Lanka's wellness and spiritual tourism introducing demanding Yoga and Buddhist meditation is an essential need.

Material and Methods

This is a qualitative study. The population is executives and yoga and meditation teachers employed in wellness retreats in the southern and central provinces. The sample was selected through quota sampling and the sample size is 11 a combination of executives and wellness practitioners. This sample gives insight into the various Yoga and Buddhist practices utilized in the wellness retreats of Sri Lanka. The conceptual framework is as below;

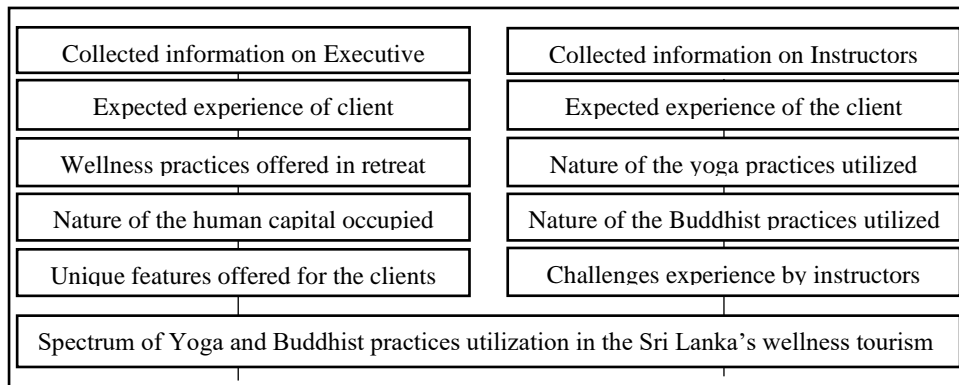


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

The data collection tool was the semi-structured interview and data was analyzed through thematic analysis. The recognized coding patterns are the nature of the wellness and spiritual tourism of Sri Lanka, applications, human capital, client experience, uniqueness, Yoga and Buddhist Practice, challenges, opportunities, strengths, and prospects. The narration of the study is presented under the four themes in the discussion. Further, the collected data is validated through the member-checking method

Result and Discussion

The Nature of the Sri Lanka Wellness and Spiritual Tourism Sector

Sri Lanka's wellness tourism industry was able to provide a satisfying and therapeutic service for the holistic health development of the traveler (Sivesan, 2022). The spiritual or religious tourism retreats are able to provide a cultural and spiritual experience for the seeker's journey of self-discovery. Sri Lankan wellness tourism has the caliber to offer service for the primary travelers. Further, few retreats offer conventional medical facilities for the seekers. However, there are less numbers of spiritual retreats available in Sri Lanka. The motivational factors of the travelers in Sri Lankan wellness and spiritual tourism are experiencing the holistic therapeutic services and hospitality,

Buddhist culture, exposure to a variety of complementary and alternative therapies and practices, natural atmosphere present in the wellness and spiritual retreats, and recommendations that have given by the pre visited travelers. Further, Sri Lanka wellness and spiritual retreats are able to gain worldwide recognition for their unique service. The travelers who visit the Sri Lankan wellness resorts' expected experiences are to have a satisfied wellness experience with an expert therapist, recover the chronic illness, wellness experience, be exposed to several holistic therapies, and experience all practices from one location. Moreover, based on the available natural sources travelers have the ability to engage in several recreational activities through their wellness experience in the Sri Lankan resorts. The unique feature of the travelers selecting Sri Lankan spiritual retreat is Theravada Buddhist culture in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the travelers believe they will be able to have a proper experience of Buddhist practices and Buddhist culture through their experience of the spiritual retreats in Sri Lanka. Moreover, Sri Lankan retreats employed both local and foreign inductors as instructors and therapists. In addition, presently there is a growing demand for visiting and experiencing the practices available in the wellness and spiritual retreats among the local population of Sri Lanka.

Therapeutic Practice Utilized in the Sri Lanka Wellness and Spiritual Retreats

Sri Lanka wellness retreats have the caliber to offer numerous types of conventional holistic and alternative health practices for the development of individual physical mental and spiritual health. Majorly, Sri Lanka wellness retreats utilize Ayurveda as the major traditional medical system. However, there is a lack of potential in utilizing naturopathy or traditional Chinese medical practices in the wellness resorts in Sri Lanka. Nevertheless, several therapies belonging to the medical systems offered in the Sri Lankan wellness

retreats such as acupuncture, detox dieting routing and meal preparation or demonstrating, and massage therapies are majorly offered as therapeutic services. Further, Sri Lankan wellness retreats offer a vast variety of massage therapies for wellness seekers. Moreover, with the support of the visiting resource person's Sri Lanka Wellness Retreats offered services for lifestyle change and exposure to holistic health practices for the clients. The most unique service offered in the Sri Lankan wellness retreats is they provide various yoga practices for the equanimity of the mind-body balance and exposure to Buddhist meditation practices for the enhancement of mindfulness and awareness of the individual. Moreover, provides a spiritual experience for self-discovery and self-identification. In addition, Sri Lankan spiritual retreats offer various Buddhist spiritual practices while harmonizing the various cultural Buddhist practices. However, in comparison to the global industry of wellness and spiritual tourism, there is a significant gap between the practices utilized in the Sri Lanka wellness and spiritual tourism sector (Koncul, 2012)

Nature of Buddhist Practices Offered in the Wellness and Spiritual Retreats

Presently Sri Lankan wellness and spiritual or meditation retreats offer a variety of Buddhist spiritual practices for the experience of transcendental phenomenology and enhancement of spiritual wellbeing. The travelers expect to experience pure Buddhism, exposure to the cultural Buddhism of Sri Lanka, and explore a new way to their self-discovery. Majorly therapist utilize the mindfulness and Buddhist breathing meditation practice (*anapanasathi*) for their spiritual transcended experience. These practices are delivered mainly by the local instructors and Buddhist monks attached to the retreats. There is a high demand from travelers to experience Buddhist meditation practices from the local teachers or Buddhist monks. However, there is a lack of professional individuals to meet the demands of the client on the Buddhist meditation

practices. Furthermore, a unique feature represented in the Sri Lanka wellness, spiritual, and meditation retreat is the practitioners utilize cultural Buddhist practices for the enhancement of the spiritual well-being of the travelers. Therefore, the professionals who enroll the Buddhist meditation practices perform the events of Buddhist alms-giving ceremonies, worship Buddha with the offering, enroll in Buddhist chanting practices, and conduct dhamma talks with the seeker to manage their secular conflicts and stresses. However, in comparison to global meditation and spiritual retreats Sri Lanka wellness tourism utilizes limited Buddhist practices. Therefore, the global arena utilizes the Buddhist practices of insight meditation (*vipassana*), loving-kindness meditation (*metta*), mindfulness (*sati*) dharma education session dharma talk gratitude mediation, floating meditation, attention meditation walking standing and lying meditation, and Zen meditation, with more qualified and academic practitioners.

Nature of Yoga Practices Offered in the Wellness and Spiritual Retreats

Yoga has become a major practice utilized in the wellness and spiritual retreats. The practices of Yoga can be divided into three sections those are physical postures (*asana*), breathing practice (*pranayama*), and meditation practices (*dhayana*) (Iyengar, 2008). Further studies have revealed that this practice has the therapeutic potential to enhance the holistic well-being of the individual in a clinical and evidence-based manner (Woodyard, 2011). Sri Lankan wellness and spiritual retreat offers a variety of Yoga practices for their wellness travelers. Primary wellness travelers are able to experience the yoga practices of the Sivananda traditional yoga and traditional hatha yoga practice as the primary yoga practice. Majorly, they have utilized the yoga posture and breathing practices for physical and mental health and utilize Buddhist meditation practices for spiritual well-being. However, most

wellness resorts have the capability to offer modern yoga practices for their wellness seekers. According to the Hatha and Ashtanga yoga traditions Sri Lanka wellness retreats offer Iyengar yoga, Vinyasa yoga, Yin yoga, Aerial Yoga, Restorative Yoga, Sun rise and sun set yoga, Ashtanga Yoga, Hatha vinyasa yoga and Vinyasa Karma Yoga, Further, the tantric yoga practices of kundalini yoga, yoga nidra chakra meditation and sound healing practices are offered in the Sri Lanka wellness and meditation retreats. Moreover, on the therapeutic dimension Sri Lanka wellness retreats offered personalized yoga practices for the wellness seekers. In addition to the above-mentioned yoga teachers and instructors occupied in the Sri Lankan wellness resorts are offered yoga chanting and kritan sessions for their clients. Therefore, this evidence showcases wellness travelers who wish to experience yoga in Sri Lanka will be able to experience yoga practice basic to advanced utilized in the contemporary yoga practice and yoga tourism. The spectrum of yoga practices in Sri Lanka wellness and yoga tourism is presented below;

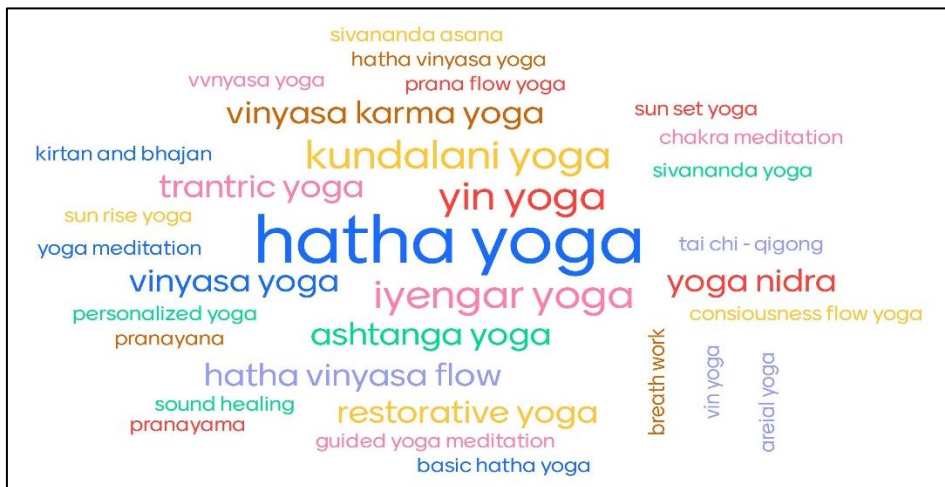


Figure 2. Yoga practices utilized in Sri Lanka wellness retreats

In addition, presently Sri Lankan wellness and yoga retreats offer yoga teacher training courses for wellness travelers. Moreover, offers therapeutic services

by combining yoga and Ayurveda intervention for primary wellness travelers. However, in Sri Lanka wellness retreats do not offer contemporary modern yoga approaches. Thus, Sri Lankan wellness resorts offer a vast variety of yoga practices for the empowerment of the holistic health of wellness travelers (Smith & Sziva, 2016).

Challenges and Future Potential of Sri Lanka Wellness and Spiritual Tourism

The development of wellness and spiritual tourism lies in several commercial and policy-related factors (Silva et.al, 2020). However, the core of the future development of Sri Lanka's wellness and spiritual tourism depends on the practices of utilization in the respective domain. Therefore, there are several challenges and positive possibilities presented by the professionals in the respective sector. The major challenge they experience is the lack of professionals to deliver yoga practices. Because Sri Lanka wellness tourism utilizes several dimensions of yoga practices most advanced approaches are delivered by the foreign yoga instructors and local instructors have the ability to deliver the basic yoga practices. Another lacuna is local teachers don't have the appropriate qualifications to deliver the yoga practices and several skill-related deficits are present. Further, there is no guidance received for the development of the yoga practice. Therefore, wellness resorts offer a variety of yoga practices but those practices are available only in a smaller number of retreats, and based on the availability of instructor's opportunity to occupy respective practices is less. Therefore, assuring the client experiences on various yoga practices in Sri Lanka wellness and spiritual tourism is problematic. Further, global spiritual and meditation retreats utilize several Buddhist meditation practices for the enhancement of the journey of self-realization. However, Sri Lankan practitioners are utilizing few Buddhist mediation practices. Moreover, recently yoga studios have also been

established in the tourist regions of Sri Lanka but there is less human capital for the employed as yoga teachers or instructors. Therefore, the major challenge experienced by the Sri Lankan wellness and spiritual retreats is qualified instructors and teachers to deliver effective yoga and Buddhist meditation sessions for the wellness seeker. Further, qualified teachers have the potential to introduce creative yoga approaches for wellness packages. Addressing these yoga practice-related inadequacies in Sri Lanka wellness and spiritual retreats will be able to provide more effective service and experience for the wellness seeker and initiate a new program on Buddhist meditation practices, yoga, and meditation teacher training courses and therapeutic packages to attract more wellness travelers and demand Sri Lankan wellness and spiritual tourism as a unique and life-changing wellness destination.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Sri Lankan wellness and meditation retreats offer a variety of Yoga and Buddhist meditation practices for wellness travelers for holistic health and lifestyle changes. The spiritual and meditation retreats in Sri Lanka offer Buddhist meditation practices narrowly compared to global ones. However, they expose seekers to Buddhist cultural practices. Further, the Sri Lankan wellness retreat offered both ancient and modern yoga practices for wellness travelers. However, the lacuna was the advanced practice offered by the foreign yoga teachers, and Sri Lankan yoga teachers' potential is limited, and deliver basic yoga practices with fewer yoga styles. Therefore, wellness travelers are able to experience various yoga practices in their wellness journey in Sri Lanka and be exposed to Buddhist cultural and meditation practices. Thus, strengthening the Sri Lankan yoga teacher's skills and competencies will be beneficial for the sustainability of the wellness and spiritual tourism sector in Sri Lanka.

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