



## Motives and Experiences of Foreign (Yoga & Spiritual) Tourist Visiting Rishikesh

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### Abstract:

*The mental strain of the people is increasing worldwide with the rise of consumerist society. Consequently, people are looking for solace in spiritual reading, meditation and moments of divine ecstasy. This has, universally led to increase in Spiritual tourists over the recent years. Globally, India has been respected as a destination of spiritual tourism. It has been observed that spirituality, in general, has recently become an important subject of research in social and business areas. People from across the world now come to India for Ayurveda, yoga and meditation in Rishikesh, The present study highlights on some of the important aspects in the one of the most important spiritual cities of Uttarakhand- 'Rishikesh'. Rishikesh remains the most preferred spiritual destinations in India amongst foreign tourists.. The research focuses on the quest to find out the motives of Yoga and spirituality travel motives of foreign tourists visiting ashrams in Rishikesh and to analyze the experience of foreign tourists visiting ashrams in Rishikesh. The methodology involved the judgment and convenience sampling that included any individual foreign tourist who was visiting Rishikesh for yoga and spirituality during the time period of January to March 2013. Primary data were collected using survey method with questionnaire schedule using Linkert Scale to collect experiences of foreign tourists to gauge the satisfaction index towards tourism facilities and open ended questions to find out the motives of Yoga and spirituality travel motives of foreign tourists visiting ashrams /Hotels in Rishikesh.*

**Keywords:** Spirituality, Tourist satisfaction, travel motive, Yoga

### 1. Introduction

Tourism, as viewed by Smith (1992), is an activity dependant on three operative elements – discretionary income, leisure time and social sanctions permissive of travels. Tourism industry fosters a country's economy, stimulates development process, restores cultural heritage, and helps in maintaining international peace and understanding. It has been observed that spirituality, in general, has recently become an important subject of research in social and business areas. This has added a new dimension to the tourism industry, called spiritual tourism. Spiritual tourism, also termed as religious heritage tourism, includes all the religions, religious places associated with, emotional attachment to these centers and infrastructure facilities for the tourists. This can also be referred to as pilgrimage tourism, as clients are not looking for luxury but arduous journeys to meet the divine goal or simple life. Spiritual tourism, as observed by Haq et al. (2008), seems to be a newer academic concept, but it is certainly not a new phenomenon.

### 2. Yoga and Spirituality

Yoga, from the Sanskrit, means union or yoke (Joshi, 1965). In fact, the words yoga and yoke have the same Sanskrit root. Yoga is an ancient form of spiritual self-discipline that promotes enlightenment and ultimately *samhadi*, the end-point of the yoga journey where the consciousness is stilled and energies are fully directed towards an object of attention (Lee, 2004). This induced stillness and direction of energy is about achieving higher awareness, a new state of mind or "mindfulness"

(Freidberg, 2009; Langer 1989). This mindfulness may facilitate stronger connections between individuals and place (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000). to infuse balance between the polarities of strength and compassion within an individual (Chopra & Simon, 2004). In support of the eight limbs are the six branches of yoga (*Raja, Karma, Bhakti, Jnana, Tantra, and Hatha*). While the yogin is encouraged to explore all six branches of yoga, *Raja Yoga* and its goal of *samadhi* is connected most closely to spirituality (Mehta & Mehta, 1990). Yoga is guided by eight principles. In Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, the eightfold path is described as *ashtanga* (Chatterjee & Datta, 1939) or "eight limbs" (*ashta* = eight, *anga* = limb). This path was developed Spirituality means having to do with deep, often religious, feelings and beliefs, including a person's sense of peace, purpose, connection to others, and beliefs about the meaning of life.

Spiritual motivation has been noted as a reason for adopting a yoga practice and for yoga travel (Lehto et al. 2006). There seems to be a therapeutic ability of a yoga-place connection (as through a travel destination) to foster spiritual purity (Hoyez, 2007), disrupt the mundane and allow in the 'new' (Lea, 2008). Yoga, and its intimate partner meditation, may allow individuals to achieve self-realization, purification and intrinsic feelings of love (Aggarwal et al. 2008). Yoga landscapes such as Rishikesh, India.

Engagement in meaningful travel leading to experiential intrinsic transformative processes could have positive implications for the development-of-self through a tourism product (Gelter, 2010), which in this example is yoga. A yoga journey may possibly integrate the mind, the body and the spirit (Kelly & Smith, 2009; Smith, 2003) leading to a causatum of values-laden transformation in self (Pritchard et al., 2011)

People from across the world now come to India for Ayurveda, yoga and meditation in Rishikesh, Uttarakhand that is practiced since centuries. In fact India has fast emerged as a health tourism destination because of these. Since time immemorial, India has been known for its spirituality, religious and yoga tolerance and its secular character. India is called the "Yoga-Bhoomi" and the gateway to the heavens. India is internationally renowned for its ancient healing practices and alternative therapies. For more than thousands of years now, we have followed our own indigenous healing systems and medicinal practices such as Ayurveda, Naturopathy, and Pranic Healing to name just a few. It is no wonder then that people from all over the world are turning to the Indian sub continent for guidance towards a more spiritually satisfying way of life. Rishikesh is where Raibhya Rishi is believed to have done penance to please God who appeared as Rishikesh; hence the name. Rishikesh is located at a height of about 1360 feet above sea level. It is believed that several yogis and sages lived and practiced penance here. Rishikesh represents the site where Vishnu vanquished the demon Madhu. Rishikesh is one of the first choices of tourists coming to India for Ayurveda, yoga and meditation. While yoga and meditation are practiced and taught in ashrams on riverbanks, there are reputed universities here where Ayurveda is taught. It is a proper subject, is considered as a branch of science and constant researches are conducted in the field.

According to a report by Dixit (2005), tourists visiting Uttarakhand can be categorized into three major categories. These tourist classes are: (i) Pilgrims / Religious tourists, (ii) Pleasure tourists / Holiday Makers, (iii) Special interest tourist / Adventure and Nature Lovers. Husain (2007) analyzed on the Promotional aspects of marketing strategy of tourism industry in a tourist-rich state, Uttarakhand in India. The study reveals that the tourists are significantly influenced by the package incentives offered by tour operators. Aggarwal *et al.* (2008) developed various marketing strategies to boost tourism in Rishikesh, India. The work highlights the role of yoga and spirituality in Indian tourism. The authors also attempted to bring out the motives of foreign tourists behind visiting ashrams. Karar (2010) discussed the importance of Haridwar as a potential spot for attracting tourists to the state. Karar further analyzed at length the historical and mythical aspects related to Haridwar and why the place is being considered as a sacred city. Haq *et al.* (2008) explores the relevance of

marketing strategies by Ansoff to the typology model proposed earlier by Haq and Jackson in 2006. Haq also emphasized that market development and product development strategies are critical for making interested customers involved which is an important part of tourism logistic

### 3. Objectives of this Study

To find out the motives of Yoga and spirituality travel motives of foreign tourists visiting ashrams in Rishikesh and to analyze the experience of foreign tourists visiting ashrams in Rishikesh.

### 4. Research Methodology

The research methodology involved the judgment sampling that included any individual foreign tourist who was visiting Rishikesh for yoga and spirituality during the time period of January to March 2104. Keeping in view the financial limitation for this study the sample size was kept to 100 foreign tourists. Primary data were collected using survey method with questionnaire schedule. The questionnaire schedule consisted of two parts. Part A, collected experiences of foreign tourists through 5 point Linkert scale to gauge the satisfaction index towards tourism facilities. Part B of Questionnaire was aimed to find out the motives of Yoga and spirituality travel motives of foreign tourists visiting ashrams in Rishikesh. They were interviewed and asked to fill questionnaires on streets, ashrams, hotels etc. Secondary data was collected from various journals, books and internet.

**Table 1. Demographic profile of Foreign Tourist during the study period**

Demographic Profile of Respondent		
Gender	Male	58
	Female	42
Age (years)	Below 20	15
	20 To 30	25
	30 To 40	40
	40 To 50	14
	50 To 60	7
	Above 60	1
Stay (visit) period in days	1 To 7	62
	7 To 15	28
	Above 15	10
Marital status	Married	44
	Unmarried	56
Occupation	Student	21
	Housewife	12
	Service	45
	Business	22
Education	Secondary	2
	Higher Secondary	15
	Graduation	48
	Post Graduate	32
	Others	3

**Table 2. Satisfaction towards Tourist Facilities and Transport**

Dimensions	Mean*	S.D	Skewness	Standard error of skewness	Chi square	p
Availability of conveyance in city & rural area of Rishikesh	3.42	1.505	-0.405	0.241	6.6	0.01
Accessibility of the road in Rishikesh	3.06	1.406	-0.064	0.241	1.4	0.01
Hygiene at tourist place	3.32	1.347	-0.429	0.241	3.7	0.01
Proper interpretation facilities at tourist / Spiritual spots spots	3.4	1.333	-0.485	0.241	7.8	0.01
Adequate tourist information facilities in Rishikesh	3.43	1.335	-0.6	0.241	8.9	0.01

\*strongly agree-1... strongly disagree-5

**Table 3. Satisfaction towards Local facilities in Rishikesh**

Dimensions	Mean*	S.D	Skewness	Standard error of skewness	Chi square	p
Availability of tourist guide	3.37	1.308	-0.415	0.241	9.7	0.01
Tele- communication Facilities near tourist spots	3.33	1.393	-0.178	0.241	9.7	0.01
Quality of food at restaurant	2.79	1.472	0.178	0.241	5.6	0.01
Hygiene at the restaurants	3.28	1.457	-0.422	0.241	2.7	0.01
Special Tourist Packages	3.39	1.302	-0.454	0.241	1.3	0.01

\*strongly agree-1... strongly disagree-5

**Table 4. Satisfaction towards Accommodation facilities in Rishikesh**

Dimensions	Mean*	S.D	Skewness	Standard error of skewness	Chi square	p
Hygiene in the Hotel rooms	2.66	1.379	0.354	0.241	9.6	0.01
Availability of reasonable Hotel Rooms	3.14	1.349	-0.084	0.241	5.4	0.01
Easy accessibility of hotels	3.77	1.205	-0.782	0.241	1.3	0.01
Banking Facilities near tourist	3.56	1.438	-0.664	0.241	3.2	0.01
Maintenance of tourist Spots	3.09	1.498	-0.046	0.241	4.8	0.01

\*strongly agree-1... strongly disagree-5

## 5. Findings and discussions

The demographic profile of foreign tourists visiting Rishikesh during the study period indicate that about 55% are male and 45% female, falling in the age group of 25-50 where as 40% are married a 60% are unmarried. Respondents are 100% educated, 85% of them are service class and remaining is business class.

- Foreign tourists are strongly unsatisfied with the availability of conveniences in Rishikesh. The mean value is noted higher than the average standard score, while variation in the opinion and skewness is 1.50541 and -.405 respectively. This supports the above analysis. Thus the above analysis leads to the conclusion that those tourists who are interested in rural tourism or others are facing lots of problem in availability of conveniences therefore proper transportation facilities should be arranged.
- Majority of foreign tourists were uncertain and distributed towards higher side regarding the easy accessibility in Rishikesh. The mean value of the responses is on the higher side than the average standard score at five-point scale. The standard deviation and skewness noted are 1.40576 and -.064 respectively. The  $\chi^2$  value at 1 percent level of significance. Thus opinion is not equally distributed. It is concluded that majority of the respondents do not have the same opinion over the issue of easy accessibility in Rishikesh.
- The majority of responses of tourist were distributed towards higher side over the issue of hygienic conditions at tourist spots in Rishikesh. Most of them are dissatisfied with these conditions. The mean value supports the above opinion. The variation in the opinion and skewness are observed 1.34750 and -.429 respectively. The calculated  $\chi^2$  value shows significant at 1 percent level of significance. It is concluded that hygienic conditions are not satisfactory and needs more care.
- Majority of the respondents either disagree or strongly disagree with the interpretation facilities at Tourist/ Spiritual spots of Rishikesh. The mean value is higher at scaling point, whereas Standard

deviation and skewness is 1.33333 and -.485, which indicate that their opinion is distributed towards higher side on this issue. The calculated value of  $\chi^2$  shows the significant at 1 percent level of significance. The conclusion can be drawn that foreign tourist are satisfied with the interpretation facilities at tourist spots

- The majority of the respondents do not agree with the availability tourist information facilities in Rishikesh. The mean value of the responses depicts that majority are lying towards higher side of the mean standard score at five point scale. The standard deviation and skewness is 1.33526 and -.600 respectively. Further  $\chi^2$  value is significant at 1 percent level of significance. It shows that opinion of the respondents is not equally distributed. It is concluded that tourists are not satisfied with the tourist information given on the signboards or offices Rishikesh.
- Respondent's satisfaction levels towards easy availability of tourist guide at Rishikesh are distributed towards higher side of the average score i.e. disagree to strongly disagree. The mean value is higher than the average standard score. The standard deviation and skewness is 1.30775 and -.415. The  $\chi^2$  value is significant at 1 percent level of significance. It indicates that their opinion is not equally distributed. It is concluded that tourist guides are not easily available at every tourist /spiritual spot.
- The telecommunication facilities near tourist /spiritual spots are not up to the satisfaction of foreign tourists. The mean value is lower than the average score. The variation in the opinion and skewness is 1.39302 and -.178. This supports the above analysis. Calculated  $\chi^2$  value is significant at 1 percent level of significance. It reveals that opinion is not equally distributed. Thus it is concluded that telecommunication facilities near tourist /spiritual spots are not satisfactory.
- Majority of the respondents either strongly agree or agree with the quality of food at restaurants. The mean value noted lower than the average standard score. The standard deviation and skewness is 1.47227 and .178. It shows that opinion is distributed more towards lower side of average score. The  $\chi^2$  calculated value is significant at 1 percent level of significance, which indicates opinion is not equally distributed. The above analysis concludes that tourist is satisfied with the quality of food in the restaurants.
- Majority of the respondents are dissatisfied with the hygiene at restaurants. The mean value, standard deviation and skewness indicate that their opinion is distributed towards higher side than the average score. The calculated  $\chi^2$  value is significant at 1 percent level of significant. Therefore the conclusion drawn is majority of the tourists are not satisfied with the hygiene in the restaurants
- Majority of the respondents are not satisfied with Special tourist packages for Rishikesh and are distributed more towards higher side i.e. disagree to uncertain. The noted mean value is higher than the average standard score, while variation in the opinion and skewness is 1.30186 and -.454 respectively. This supports the above analysis. Further  $\chi^2$  test is significant at 1 percent level of significance. It reveals the opinion is not equally distributed. Thus the above analysis concluded that tourist is not satisfied with the Special tourist packages for Rishikesh.
- Majority of the respondents are strongly satisfied with the hygiene in the room their responses are towards the lower side of the average score. The mean value is lower at five-point scale. The standard deviation and skewness is 1.37965 and .354. The  $\chi^2$  calculated value is significant at 1 percent level of significance. It is concluded that most of the tourist are satisfied with the hygiene of the room.
- Respondents either agree or disagree and further distributed towards lower side of the average standard. The mean value supports the above opinion. The standard deviation and skewness is 1.34855 and -.084. The  $\chi^2$  calculated value is significant at 1 percent level of significance. Opinion is not equally distributed. It is concluded that tourist satisfaction regarding reasonable rooms depends on the time i.e. at peak tourist time or normal time.
- Respondent's opinion towards easy accessibility of hotels at rural areas is strongly disagreeing. The mean value is higher at average score. The variation in the opinion and skewness is 1.20483 and -.782. Calculated  $\chi^2$  value is significant at 1 percent level of significance. The option is not



equally distributed. Thus, it is concluded that they are not at all satisfied with the accessibility of hotels in Rishikesh.

- Majority of the respondents are distributed towards higher side on the issue of banking facilities near tourist spots. Mean value is lower at five-point scale. The standard deviation and skewness observed is 1.43773 and -.664 respectively. The calculated  $\chi^2$  value is significant at 1 percent level of significance. It indicates that banking facilities are not satisfactory near tourist spots.
- Majority of the respondents strongly agree with the maintenance of tourist spots. The mean value is higher at five-point scale. The standard deviation and skewness is 1.49811 and -.046. Calculated  $\chi^2$  value is significant at 1 percent level of significant, which shows that opinion is not equally distributed and distributed towards the higher side of the average score. Therefore it is concluded that a majority of the foreign tourist are not satisfied with the maintenance of tourist places at Rishikesh.

The analysis of Part B of questionnaires revealed the information related to the travel motives of foreign tourists to Rishikesh. The motives of foreign tourists behind visiting ashrams have been with the belief that religious places give a peace of mind and spiritual satisfaction. The preference was to make trips to religious places rather than adventurous, historical or exotic sites. Foreign tourists preferred Holy Ganges, prayers at night at the bank of Ganges, temples, Indian cuisines, sermons and interaction with monks. The Indian festivals are major attraction among foreign tourists. Majorly foreign tourists believe in Indian religion and customs and enjoy the rituals followed in Indian tradition. They have keen desire to learn about the religious importance of Haridwar, ashrams and Holy Ganges.

## 6. Conclusion and Suggestions

Spirituality is found to be one major attraction for international tourists in Rishikesh. This study identifies some basic features for Spiritual Tourism. Most important of them are that foreign tourists are not looking for luxury but arduous journeys to meet the divine goal or simple life & the technology, which makes traveling easier. An extensive market research programme should be launched in the target source markets and tourism products developed to cater to the interests of each source market. An effective and ongoing market representation presence should be established with the travel trade in each source market and an Internet portal should be set up in various languages to provide information. The government should represent India as a destination of yoga and spirituality. Various policies should be made to encourage the tourists from the various parts of the globe.

Rishikesh has outstanding tourism products and has potential to become a major spiritual tourism destination. The city has a greater value for domestic tourist because of its spiritual sites. There has been a phenomenal increase in spiritual travelers in the recent years owing to generic changes in the people's attitude towards spirituality. No study has been carried out regarding the marketing and logistics aspects of spiritual tourism. Infrastructure has been reported as one of the important aspects in spiritual tourism marketing. There are many tourism products like fairs and festivals, handicrafts, proper transportation, accommodation that boost tourism of an area, but these are taking a back seat in Rishikesh as of now. It should be made an important and integral part of spiritual tourism. Foreign tourists visit Rishikesh to get a satisfaction with divine spirituality and self discovery. The temple, the river and the tranquil environment and hygiene at the hotel rooms of Rishikesh are highly appreciated by all foreign tourists. Although they feel quite satisfied with visit to Rishikesh but still a gap exist between their expected and perceived services. The reasons for this gap have been identified as poor conditions of ordinary buses and share taxies plying between tourist places, awful maintenance of city road was well as in the rural areas, traffic congestion, and unhygienic condition of restaurant at Rishikesh. Based on this identification recommendation have been offered for eliminating the gap. This may result into a tourist's delight and an increase in tourist arrivals at Uttaranchal.

This Case study based investigations has revealed facts about the specific spiritual activity centers- Rishikesh and will help formulating tourism management strategies. The tourism marketing for

Rishikesh needs to change from its traditional marketing approach to one that is more competitive and modern. It needs to develop a unique market position, image and brand, which cannot be held by any other competitor. It can be done by presenting Rishikesh as a place of spirituality, meditation and yoga. Places like Rishikesh which had already been known as the yoga capital of the world, still have a lot of potential to attract the tourists, especially the foreign tourists who are visiting to India for learning yoga and discovering their spiritual side.

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