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The wellness modification of yoga in Norway

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ABSTRACT

This article looks at divergent views of yoga as a complementary wellness activity in Norway through a study of yoga classes whilst employing a qualitative research methodology. Furthermore, the research focuses on how and why yoga is modified by instructors. The discourse is analysed through the application of interpretative phenomenological analysis. Findings indicate that a need for stress relief creates a demand for alternative wellness practices, such as yoga. However, modifications made by instructors to the traditional practice in order to complement the cultural norms of the clients may pose challenges for clients in deriving the maximum benefits. Modifying the practice may also inhibit clients from completely exploring the correct techniques. Besides, marketing yoga as merely a physical activity while attempting to present it as a culturally neutral practice is only a partial offer. Eliminating key elements, such as meditation, chants and breath awareness techniques, suppresses the authenticity of the traditional format which centres on a holistic mind-body-soul approach. Along with achieving optimum physical benefits, improving mental wellbeing is equally integral through yoga. Hence, for service providers, it is imperative to be conscientious of maintaining the authenticity of the yogic practice as opposed to compromising it in lieu of profitability.

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Introduction

This paper looks at divergent views of yoga as a complementary wellness activity in Norway through a study of yoga classes. The escalation of life stressors may have a role in intensifying the demand for complementary wellness activities that work on the mind, body and soul. Yoga, as a complementary wellness activity, has not only travelled all over the world as a wellness offer, it has also been heavily commercialised. Research shows that in the west, yoga has emerged to become a multibillion-dollar industry (Fish, 2006).

While yoga is perceived both as a form of exercise as well as a spiritual pathway, the yogic practice has claimed to transform avid followers and has also managed to turn away serious sceptics (Smith, 2003). Regardless of its attraction or disenchantment, yoga has created enough demand to turn a traditional practice into a trendy consumer

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product. Yoga, however, is not about commercialisation or commodification, it is instead a holistic practice centred on health, spirituality and wellbeing (Bowers & Cheer, 2017).

Yoga in the west is often chosen to improve health and enhance wellbeing. Having its origins from eastern parts of the world and being culturally distinctive, it is perceived as having spiritual affiliations from ancient times and may attract scepticism (Samuel, 2008). Some groups that oppose yogic and meditative practices in the west caution that the practices may have religious undertones, while Hindu activists from India condemn the adapted versions of postural yoga for not acknowledging its origins for the sake of internationalising it as a business (Jain, 2014).

For instance, in the Scandinavian context, research indicates that introducing yoga in a school in Stockholm attracted opposition and sparked a debate on whether yoga is an exercise or religious worship. The practice was perceived as having religious connotations and raised concerns (Zetterqvist & Skeie, 2014). Furthermore, the study highlights that yoga in Scandinavian school systems may be construed as having subtle religious messages.

Although there is an argument that many South-Asian doctrines in their original context operate coherently within a conceptual framework and make no distinction between religion, culture and artistic form, it is also reiterated that in western thought these features are usually viewed as being mutually exclusive (Gupta, 2006). However, in the case of the Swedish school, this remains far from truth as yogic practices were linked to religion. This points that the theory and actual research findings stand conflicted, creating a gap in the literature.

Clearly, from the purview of service providers of yoga, reservations of clients around the yogic practice may pose problems as it limits them in reaching a larger market segment due to varying perceptions. Consequently, the yogic practice may be moulded in order to fit within the cultural as well as psychological premise of the consumer. Although the service provider's intent might be to present cultural service offers in appealing ways to clients, from the demand perspective clients desire to get the maximum wellness benefits in a cost-effective way. This demand and supply cycle have several implications on both the clients and the service providers.

Amidst this demand and supply exchange, yoga's journey from classical to contemporary has seen several modifications, changes and alterations (Antony, 2014; Beaman, 2016). While alterations may be perceived as novel in contemporary contexts, changes to the traditional yogic practices raise questions regarding authenticity. Even if modifications are attributed to consumer demand, maintaining authenticity of the traditional practice and mediating yoga correctly remains the instructors' prerogative.

Turning the focus to the objective of this paper, the research investigates how yoga as a complementary wellness activity is perceived and conducted within the Norwegian wellness landscape. Besides, if it is conducted according to consumer guidance and responsiveness or the instructors' training, knowledge and skills. Further, the study centres on understanding whether clients and instructors have similar or different views on yoga, and how might these viewpoints influence the presentation of yoga in Norway. Finally, it attempts to decipher the reasons why instructors may feel compelled to adapt the yogic practice and what might be the implications of altering the practice.

Literature review

In Europe, the philosophy as well as practice of wellness has changed over the years. The growing scepticism towards synthetic medicine is stated as a key factor to seek alternative natural therapies that promote well-being (Voigt et al., 2011). Previously, curative medical treatments were the norm, but in the present-day scenario an interest in preventive wellness has risen (Smith & Puczkó, 2010).

The need for enhanced wellness motivates individuals to choose destinations and activities that facilitate a holistic experience (Bowers & Cheer, 2017). The impetus towards engaging in holistic wellness offers could be prompted by push factors creating a wish to “escape from a mundane environment for the purpose of relaxation and evaluation of oneself” (Pizam et al., 1999, p. 9).

Moreover, a desire for exploration coupled with high exposure to different activities due to globalisation and social media could trigger an interest in wellness and alternative experience, partly in answer to modern stress and estrangement (Csirmaz & Petó, 2015; Jacobsen & Viken, 2014). As several health disorders are associated with psychosomatic stress, activities that help alleviate or lessen the stress may be preferred (Ludwig & Kabat-Zinn, 2008).

While the wellness spectrum covers ancient to new-age methods to promote health, ancient cultures have emphasised a holistic approach to wellness and this method has been integrated with western societies through pre-modern activities, such as yoga and meditation (Barnes et al., 2008; Milićević & Jovanović, 2015). Particularly, in Europe and the Americas, yogic practice is based on a pragmatic belief backed by a scientific premise that it aids health and optimises wellbeing (Newcombe, 2009).

Northern European societies saw a new age movement, in the early 1970s, with the spread of Hare Krishna and other South-Asian practices, such as transcendental meditation (Gilhus, 2016). Yet, attitudes of participants may vary due to cultural, social as well as personal conditioning (Kotler, 2000). While research alludes that the younger population of Norway is less affiliated with traditional beliefs (Urstad, 2017), the majority participants of yoga are women who choose it as a lifestyle activity and interpret it merely as a sport (Green et al., 2018).

A biased perspective of yoga might prevail because cultural wellness activities in the west are usually reconstructed to suit the psyche of the practitioners (Beaman, 2016). Moreover, elements such as chanting might be interpreted as having undercurrents of religion and hence removed from the practice (Masters, 2014). Irrespective of consumer interpretation of yoga, the National Institute of Health describes yoga as a form of complementary and alternative medicine.

Yoga

Archeological indications propose that the origins of yoga were found in India as early as 3000 B.C. (Raj, 1995). While yoga is considered a holistic method towards wellbeing and health, it is defined as, an ancient Indian way of life which comprises the practice of postures, regulated breath techniques as well as meditation (Deekshitulu, 2014; Williams et al., 2003). Yoga intends to harmonise and integrate one’s physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects (Sengupta, 2012).

In Sanskrit, yoga means union. Patanjali's yoga sutras state that yoga is the union of the body, mind and soul (Lasater, 1997). Yoga is centred on Patanjali's eight-fold path (Cowen & Adams, 2005). The eight-fold path of yoga includes, observing restraint known as yama; daily rituals termed as niyama; physical postures identified as asanas; breathing practices recognised as pranayama; abstinence classified as pratyahara; concentration and focus called dharana; meditation or dhyana; and enlightenment characterised as samadhi (Iyengar, 1979).

The practice of yoga is seen as a suitable intervention for anxiety reduction while enhancing a sense of wellness and constructive connections (Hagen & Nayar, 2014). Besides, yoga is affiliated with transcendental awakening and activation of the chakras or energy centres through breath work while training in one's spiritual development (Johari, 2000).

Pranayama, chanting and meditation

Rhythmic breath techniques, known as pranayama means "to breathe forth," from incorrect shallow breathing to a conscious deep diaphragmatic breathing (Rosen, 2002, p. 18). Additionally, scholars contend that consistent "Om" chanting practice which is an integral part of the yogic routine "results in enduring changes in mental and brain function" (Lutz et al., 2008, p. 165).

Both chanting and meditation have become widespread in western countries as tools for stress management (Xue et al., 2007). Furthermore, "the word meditation is used to describe practices that self-regulate the body and mind, thereby affecting mental events by engaging a specific attentional set" (Cahn & Polich, 2006, p. 180).

Yoga in wellness businesses – modifications and perceived authenticity

Scholars theorise perceptions of yoga in different contexts. They argue that yoga in the business context is often advertised as a resourceful product of consumption; in the wellness context, as a health practice; in the cultural context, as a traditional practice of national heritage (Askegaard & Eckhardt, 2012). Furthermore, it is claimed that the cultural hybridisation of eastern activities embedded in western settings gives rise to a debate on the fusion of traditional practices with modern ideologies (Coskuner-Balli & Ertimur, 2017).

As opposed to the traditional yogic path, in contemporary western societies, it is often seen that yoga is presented as mainly a physical form of exercise (Beaman, 2016). Additionally, modifications of yoga are broadly apparent with the upsurge of innovative styles such as hip-hop yoga, yin yoga, yoga rave, chi yoga and so on (Puustinen & Rautaniemi, 2015). Likewise, newly created styles such as goat yoga are trending (Rodriguez, 2019).

The fusion of ancient yogic practice with unusual contemporary approaches is now apparent wherein practitioners are not aware of the classical format (Coskuner-Balli & Ertimur, 2017). Correspondingly, it can be argued that one of the major issues is that contemporary yoga instructors may not possess enough knowledge of the traditional practice. Today, instructors can conduct classes just after having done a short course in yoga (Paul, 2007).

In a quest for short-term learning, only the physical aspects of yoga may be incorporated by instructors and the philosophy might be left aside (Dazey, 2005). The Oxford handbook of happiness explains that the ancient Indian philosophy and spirituality are deeply concerned with gaining insights into intrinsic pleasures while emphasising seeking happiness within oneself instead of deriving it through external sources (Sala-game, 2013).

Hence, the lack of awareness of the philosophical backdrop as well as operating with partial knowledge of the correct techniques may influence how classes are structured and how yoga is transmitted. Also, diversification and hybridisation bring to the forefront concerns regarding cultural appropriation and the possibility of distortion (Berman, 2004). This is particularly so when cultural property is taken over for commercial purposes by individuals who have no connection with the tradition.

Furthermore, apprehensions pertaining to the authenticity of the traditional practice emerge. Perceived authenticity is a crucial factor of a significant experience although some cultural experiences may be intentionally moulded (Selstad, 2007; Zatori et al., 2018). Yoga may be deliberately distorted and packaged to appeal to the western consumer as a differentiation strategy.

Especially due to increased competition and concerns about the sustainability of the business, service providers may adopt unique ways to position the same product differently (Smith & Puczkó, 2008). Owing to consumer demand, it may be justified that suppliers feel compelled to utilise the most effective practices that produce favourable results in order to successfully sustain in the market and maintain constant profitability (Kreitz, 2008; Miller, 1984). Since every client has unique needs, requirements and expectations, it becomes vital for the service provider to recognise those needs and fulfil them (Larsen & Aske, 1992).

Still, it can be reasoned that need fulfilment and modification of the activity could remain mutually exclusive. Some scholars suggest that the consumer leads the service provider to act (Larsen & Aske, 1992). Similarly, other scholars reiterate that the consumers are the ones directing the performance (Deighton, 1992). This implies that the service providers are not wholly responsible for the alteration of the activities.

This theory remains questionable especially because clients can gain accurate information on “culture specific” wellness activities easily due to external influencers, such as movies, television, advertising and social media (Castillo, 1995, p. 18). Besides, as perceived authenticity can be utilised as a branding strategy tampering with it could lead to a loss of credibility for wellness business suppliers (Morgan et al., 2011).

Methods

This research utilised qualitative methods to answer the research questions primarily centred on how clients perceive and engage with the yogic practice and how instructors present the yoga wellness offer to clients. Hence, the study relied on semi-structured in-depth interviews along with observations.

One of the purposes of conducting observations was to supplement the verbal responses of the interviewees. Since the research objective was to understand how yoga is presented in the Norwegian wellness context, observations focused on whether the class sequence included warm-ups, chanting, breath techniques or were the

instructors solely centred on physical postures. Also, observations were made on how clients responded to elements such as breath techniques and chanting. The observations were made by attending yoga sessions of different instructors.

The purpose of in-depth interviews was to gain a comprehensive understanding of the service provider and consumer perspectives. One strength of in-depth interviews is that they provide a significant description of the social environment (Silverman, 2016). Moreover, in-depth interviews are emergent processes mainly concerned with how the experiences of participants can be best understood (Charmaz, 1990).

In total, 45 interviews were conducted, lasting between 15 and 60 minutes. Out of which, four respondents were yoga studio as well as gym managers, five were yoga instructors, while thirty-six were clients of yoga. The interviews were transcribed and compiled into a corpus of textual data.

Informants were purposely selected based on criteria such as gender, age and role (client, instructor or manager) at various yoga studios, gyms and wellness centres that offer complementary wellness activities. Some hotels that organise wellness activities for their employees were included. Hotel employees representing different departments such as housekeeping and front staff who participated in the yoga sessions were interviewed. Other interviewees were university students and professionals. [Appendix 1](#) includes the questionnaires used to collect informant responses along with a participant profile table.

There were no strong criteria for exclusion in the study. Mainly those informants that participated in yoga generally on a regular basis and paid for the activities were included in the research. Service providers and clients were asked partly the same and partly different questions. Two interview guides were created, one for each segment. The main focus of the interviews was on the informants' views of yoga, their motivation for attending yoga classes, and their general understanding of yoga as an adapted wellness activity.

The sample size was based on the principle of saturation. The basic premise being that when new data ceases to offer any fresh information a point of saturation is reached (Mason, 2010). This point was reached when the informants repeated earlier statements given about yoga and provided little new insight on the topic.

The study included service providers and clients of yoga primarily in Stavanger and Oslo, Norway. Most informants were Norwegian while some were international expatriates studying or working in Norway. The majority of informants (22 clients and 7 service providers) were women. The women respondents comprised the predominant clientele. This is reflected in the findings.

Most interviews took place in gyms, yoga studios and other similar settings where yoga classes were offered, usually after a class was finished. In this connection, participant observation also took place during the yoga sessions. Field notes were taken based on the observations and impressions shared by respondents. Interviewees voluntarily shared their religious affiliations, profession and nationality. Anonymity of respondents and other ethical considerations were maintained throughout the study.

The data analysis took the form of an interpretative phenomenological study of the research data (Smith & Osborn, 2004). Phenomenological analysis intends to investigate how informants assign meaning to their experiences and capture the essence of their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2017). During the setting of the classes and afterwards a

rapport was established that allowed the interviewees to speak freely of their views and experiences. A full and interesting material was gathered on how people engaged in yoga classes.

This study engaged in two strategies in order to establish credibility. The first strategy “corroborating evidence through triangulation of multiple data sources,” (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 260) entailed utilising different theoretical perspectives from three broad disciplines – tourism management, culture as well as health and wellness. In addition, two methods of inquiry were utilised – observations and in-depth interviews.

The second strategy, “prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field,” (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 262) was applied by building long-term rapport with several participants and instructors at yoga sessions as well as getting acclimated to the culture prior to beginning the interviews.

Results: comparing the views of participants involved in yoga classes

Findings from observations

The yogic process was highly altered by most yoga instructors and excluded warm-ups, breathing techniques, chanting as well as deep relaxation at the end of the session. Offering fast-paced yoga classes, with the intention of creating a dynamic flow implicating a smooth transitioning from one posture to the next at a rapid pace, seemed to be preferred by most instructors. Most instructors did not seem eager to stay in one posture for a long time although that is a suggested way to practice traditional yoga. Instead, they wanted to quickly move from posture to posture.

Furthermore, each instructor had their own style based on their previous training and school that certified them. Regular clients noticed this variability and raised questions regarding the authenticity of the yogic practice. Moreover, some clients’ preferred being corrected by the instructors, while others did not. Hence, most instructors refrained from correcting clients’ postures.

Resistance to chanting was observed. Several clients in the yoga classes held back from chanting wherein the instructor included chants. Some even chuckled and laughed during chanting and breathing practices. However, there were a few clients that freely chanted with the instructor and participated fully. Overall, full participation by all clients was not evident. In addition, several instructors skipped breath techniques and chanting completely to avoid discomfort amongst clients.

High categorisation of yoga was evident by the service providers. Some yoga studios linked themselves with certain yoga schools and claimed that they hired instructors that were trained by their specific school of association. Additionally, a clear distinction appeared in the styles that yoga studios and gyms adopted. Each class was uniquely named and was distinguished accordingly. For instance, vinyasa yoga, slow vinyasa yoga, yoga fundamentals, power yoga, yin yoga, sunrise yoga, restorative yoga, and so forth.

Findings from the instructors’ perspective

Though the instructors try to make the practice appear authentic, in Norway yoga does not seem very authentic unless the instructors have been trained in India. – P38 – Indian yoga instructor in Norway

Yoga instructors trained in India did not approve of the authenticity of yoga in Norway. They opined that yoga instructors that have neither visited India nor have received training from an Indian yoga school did not have the precise training. They also raised concerns regarding alterations to the practice leading to temporary side effects. For instance, improper sequencing and the lack of rest between certain postures may result in clients feeling uncomfortable or experiencing a head rush after performing inverted postures. Hence, some instructors emphasised that being cognisant of the correct techniques is crucial.

It is necessary to adapt and make yoga culturally neutral so that everyone can relate to it. – P 45 – Norwegian yoga instructor

Several yoga instructors stated that they did not encourage chanting and pranayama (breath awareness practice) in their classes to avoid discomfort amongst clients. Moreover, all instructors agreed that the yoga practices in Norway are a lot different, greatly tweaked and modified. They argued that the modification of yoga is done to be viewed as being culturally neutral. The instructors further explained that since they learned yoga in Europe, to a great degree they have invented their own style of instruction. They admitted steering away from the traditional practice taught in India and justified it as having modernised it to cater to the European clientele. However, they did not comment on the kind of implications modifications may have on either the authenticity or the service quality.

Findings from the clients' perspective

The Norwegian dream is to have a house, two cars, a boat, a cabin and all the material things that are available. This creates too much stress. Yoga, nature walks and meditation calm the mind and bring peace. – P 2 – Norwegian yoga client

Findings suggest that women who actively partake in yoga and meditation on a regular weekly basis were mainly concerned about health and stress. The reasons for being highly stressed were primarily attributed to issues related to job, finances as well as personal life. Additionally, most women also stated that the Norwegian society may be presented as being equal towards everyone, but they did not subscribe to this ideology. They further elaborated that neither did they receive equal pay at their workplace, nor did they receive equal help at home in matters related to housework.

Furthermore, they specified that the lack of au pairs and maids was another reason for them to feel over-burdened with work and childcare, which affected them mentally. Divorce and marital conflict were stated as factors that triggered their stress levels and increased anxiety whilst giving rise to multiple health issues. They expressed that complementary wellness helps them both on a physical level by increasing the body's flexibility as well as on a mental level by calming their mind and getting rid of stress. Some clients emphasised the positive influence that meditative practices had on their mental peace and reiterated that meditation as well as breath awareness techniques need to be included in all yoga sessions.

Yoga is good for stretching and flexibility. During the practice, one can move parts of the body that are usually not moved. For instance, hip rotations are not done day to day, but they are included in yoga classes. – P 18 – Polish yoga client in Norway

Younger clients of yoga in Norway reported feeling less stressed. They expressed that their primary goal was to gain physical flexibility through yoga. They also emphasised that certain postures, for instance, hip rotations and inverted poses, led them to work out all parts of the body which they otherwise would not be mindful of.

Besides, they mentioned that meditation and breathing techniques made them feel centred. They viewed yoga as a form of physical exercise with a subtle mix of spirituality, however not at all as a religious practice. Most of these respondents reported being non-religious. Several participants stated that yoga classes gave them energy, which they were in search of, to cope with the daily challenges of work and study.

Technological addiction has made people disconnected from one another. Many are no longer in touch with their feelings. Instead of going inward and checking on their feelings, they go outward towards technology. This creates a lot of stress because humans are social beings. – P 22 – Norwegian yoga client

Interviewees who have young children informed that stress is increasing in children and young adults as they are expected to do a lot of different activities. They affirmed that being on at all times, implying the excessive usage of technological devices, gives rise to sleep issues. Moreover, some also stated that in Norway it is easy to get material stuff. So, instead of going inward and checking on their feelings, they go outward to get things. As an alternative to relaxing, most informants specified being constantly online. This became a reason for not connecting face-to-face with other human beings, socialise in person and make eye contact.

Other clients echoed similar concerns stating that online dating apps are making people less social. They acknowledged that people hide behind a screen and do not wish to have a dialogue in day-to-day life. They expressed that the over-dependence on technology is lessening real-life sociability wherein people are not easily coming together. Likewise, some informants raised concerns about issues pertaining to romantic relationships and contested the lack of gender integration in Norway. They observed that Norwegian men and women do not easily come together as friends or partners, which limits social interaction.

In Norway, there is a lack of social support, very few friends and no family. There is no one to talk to about pressures, no human support system available which gives a feeling of isolation. Yoga and meditation work as therapies. Yoga is a medicine for relaxation and a gift from nature. – P 3 – Venezuelan expatriate yoga client in Norway

The expatriate women, working in full-time jobs, informed that they sensed a lack of social support in Norway. They described feeling isolated due to the lack of friendliness and sociability. Most stated that despite living-in with their partners or flat-mates, they lacked profound deep conversations. The lack of honest dialogue between them and their housemates reinstated a sense of disengagement.

Moreover, they alleged that since the Norwegian ideology is that of equality, their partners pressurise them to have full-time jobs in order to earn and make an equal contribution. They stated feeling stressed-out due to the cultural differences, job demands and home upkeep issues. In order to get away and take some time for themselves, they attend yoga and meditation classes.

Working at a hotel can get stressful especially during peak hours and high season, when the hotel is full. The kitchen staff and the housekeeping staff get physically very tired, so offering

them opportunities to relax makes them feel good, manage workplace stress and enhances productivity. – P 4 – Norwegian hotel employee and yoga client

Employees of a hotel in Norway, conveyed feeling relaxed and happier, after participating in weekly yoga sessions offered as a rejuvenation activity by the hotel manager. They stated that working at a hotel raised their levels of stress due to constant demands of guests. Most informants specified stress as a reason to practice yoga, meditation and mindfulness as coping mechanisms. They appraised yoga and meditation as highly relaxing. Their main motive was to relax deeply to be able to cope better with the job. Further, the hotel manager affirmed that mindfulness practices in the workplace impact employee productivity while offering them a restorative avenue to recharge.

The quality and authenticity of the yoga practice greatly depends on the instructor. Instructors that come from India or have learned yoga in India have a different way of conducting the classes. – P 15 – Norwegian yoga client

Regular clients of yoga that tried different classes as well as travelled to India for yoga pointed out a difference in how instructors certified from India conducted the yoga sessions as opposed to those trained in the west. Some questioned the authenticity of the classes held by instructors certified in the west. Others expressed concerns regarding each instructor having a distinct style which left them confused about which style reflected real yoga.

Several clients observed that instructors certified in Europe did not include warm-ups, chanting, breathing techniques and deep guided mediation in the sessions. This led them to perceive the sessions as incomplete and oriented towards a physical workout. Contrarily, while practicing yoga with instructors certified from India, clients reported feeling a sense of spiritual connect, deeper relaxation and an understanding of yogic philosophy. The after-effects seemed to vary from instructor to instructor.

Additionally, clients stated that their perception of yoga would depend on the instructor. They further specified that yoga might seem like a spiritual practice if instructors incorporated philosophy and meditation in the sessions. Whereas, if they only focused on exercise, then it would be perceived as a workout. However, several clients expressed an interest to learn about the underlying meaning behind chanting and other meditative practices as well as showed a willingness to participate more fully if given enough information by the instructor.

Discussion: divergent views on yoga as a complementary wellness activity

The desire for stress relief, restoration, relaxation and a sense of wellbeing motivates clients towards complementary wellness interventions. Clients may either come in with preconceived notions about the activities or they may form opinions based on what they experience in the sessions. Regardless of this, the transmission of activities lies within the domain of the instructors.

Instructors face a challenge of either staying close to the traditional practice regardless of how clients respond or adapt it to tone down elements of the yogic practice that appear unusual or unfamiliar. Altering the practice creates a problem as yoga gets misrepresented and appropriated (Berman, 2004). Much of how the yoga classes are developed and structured today could somewhat reflect the clients' resistance to certain techniques.

Although it may be argued that the adaptation of yoga in Norway could be partly due to the clients' resistance to elements such as chanting and pranayama, the core responsibility to sequentially transmit yoga in its authentic format lies mainly with the instructor. As highlighted in the literature, previous research argues that most yoga practitioners in Scandinavia view the practice simply as a physical workout or sport (Green et al., 2018).

Additionally, scholars have contended that though certain activities may be taken up in a quest for achieving optimum levels of health and wellness, at times they are deduced simply as services meant for consumption and nothing more (Furnham, 2002). However, previous research does not explain why this may be so. The underlying reasons for this finding can be clarified through the responses given by younger informants in this study.

Those who emphasised stretching as their core motive disclosed partial participation in yoga as they refrained from chanting. Some even discussed mentally pulling away from completely immersing into chants and meditative techniques which they deciphered as being too spiritual. This finding could be construed as clients perceiving chanting as having subtle religious undertones. Moreover, they remained averse from giving prominence to meditation as they did not feel drawn towards it. Thus, this finding echoes with findings from a previous research which states that the physical aspects of the yogic path are more likely to be accepted by practitioners, but the philosophy might be left aside (Dazey, 2005).

Nevertheless, findings of this study remain contradictory to the argument that practitioners may view chanting as a calming psychological aid (Blanch, 2007). None of the participants in this study seem to confer with this argument nor did they claim to view chanting as calming. Hence, it can be interpreted that Blanch's argument cannot be generalised and may be context-specific. Similarly, it would be important to contextualise the arguments offered in the literature.

Since this study is based in Norway, cultural distinctiveness could be the interpreted reason for several participants indulging in complementary wellness practices only partially whilst extracting the physical elements and leaving aside what they find unusual. From a cultural perspective, the instructors that were interviewed shared culture-centric viewpoints, although their views were not consensual.

Similar to the argument made by Beaman (2016) on the modification of the practices done to meet the acceptance levels of western practitioners, instructors certified in the west approved of the modification of yoga. Contrarily, alterations to the practice were viewed as tampering with authenticity by instructors certified in India (cf. Zatori et al., 2018).

This suggests that certification of instructors may lead clients to trust that a conscious effort is being made to heighten service quality and offer a perception of expertise. Yet simply having certification may neither enhance perceived authenticity nor guarantee that the correct techniques are being imparted, which may be crucial factors for clients (Zatori et al., 2018).

Concisely, it can be asserted that those who feel the need to relieve stress and move towards relaxation are more likely to seek complementary wellness activities such as yoga. Full or partial participation may be contingent upon individual openness towards culturally distinct practices. Individual belief in the benefits of the practice may also have an influence (Day, 2011). Apart from this, it can be argued that consumer motivation

differs based on individual needs as well as factors such as levels of stress, health issues as well as a belief in the benefits of the activity.

An element of cultural appropriation and the possibility of distortion involved in complementary wellness activities emerges, perhaps due to individuals using traditional cultural practices in settings where they are not competently disseminated (Berman, 2004). Hence, there may be a need to formally regulate the practices and take them seriously even when used for seemingly recreational purposes.

Whether modifications are based on consumer responses to the practice or on the instructors' judgement, they have implications for the potential benefits derived from the yogic practice. For instance, when warm-ups are skipped chances of injury or muscle cramps may arise. Similarly, when breathing techniques are excluded then the overall impact of the practice might change. Moreover, when clients see completely different teaching styles, they get confused about what yoga truly is.

Also, the labelling of yoga seems to elicit some confusion amongst clients in Norway. Yoga in most parts of India is often presented simply as yoga, and if at all categorised, it is only done so based on different schools. Moreover, since yoga is an ancient practice it would be important to note that back in ancient times it was not labelled at all the way it is categorised by different names in the present business scenario. Differentiation as a strategy could benefit wellness businesses but may fail to authenticate the consumer experience.

Conclusively, findings of this study achieve the aims and objectives of this research by understanding that clients and instructors of yoga in Norway have divergent views on it. Their intent and motivation to practice yoga also differ as service providers seek to capitalise on yoga while clients seek relaxation and improved health. The commercial sustainability of wellness businesses could be factored in as one of the reasons to modify yoga to fit within the cultural norms of the clients.

Conclusion

(a). Contribution to practice

As complementary wellness may be applied as a recreational activity, a health discipline as well as a spiritual practice, different marketing strategies are usually employed depending upon the target market segments. However, it is imperative for service providers to be cognisant of imparting the correct techniques to clients to avoid potential injuries and ensure maximum benefits. Additionally, instructors must include all portions of the yogic practice rather than focusing only on physical postures.

Since several instructors in Norway address yoga as a physical workout, while removing warm-ups and relaxation from the sessions, the approach changes the rhythm of the practice and may even dilute some of the benefits that could be otherwise derived from yoga. Such alterations and adaptations of the activities to neutralise their cultural distinctiveness may be profitable yet compromising (Antony, 2014; Beaman, 2016).

From the viewpoint of consumer and supplier intention, it can be contended that though the wellness-oriented motives of clients are divergent from the profit-oriented motives of suppliers of complementary wellness activities, it is still imperative for

suppliers to be conscientious of this conflict of interest. The lack of homogeneity often raises concerns amongst clients due to experiencing dissimilar styles and patterns of instruction in each yoga session.

Since services are heterogeneous, standardisation becomes difficult (Parasuraman et al., 1985). However, the lack of standardisation may lead to diverse consumer experiences with implications on perceived quality. Hence, it may be useful for instructors to standardise at least some portions of the practice, for instance, include warm-ups and relaxation time in each class.

(b). Contribution to knowledge

Some scholars claim that clients are the ones directing the performance (Deighton, 1992), attributing the modification to consumer demand. However, it can be argued that the findings of this study do not confer this claim. On the contrary, instructors direct the performance and assume that by discounting certain elements from the yogic practice they might make yoga culturally neutral.

Since authenticity can be used as a valuable business strategy, service providers must be conscientious that tampering with it could lead to distortion and a loss of credibility for the business (Morgan et al., 2011). Yoga presented as merely a physical activity is only a partial offer. Sidelining the mental health of clients can deplete the overall positive influence of the yogic practice.

(c). Limitations and future research

Methodological limits and challenges in this work mainly concerned the gender and role of yoga participants. Male clients were few and provided less information than female clients. The views of female participants are well represented and form the basis for analysis along with instructors, both male and female. A future study might look closer at male clients who are currently not well represented in yoga classes in Norway.

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Appendix 1 Interview guides

Interview guide for clients

Interest and motivation dimension

- (1). How interested are you in complementary wellness activities, especially yoga and meditation?
- (2). What attracts you to yoga and meditation?
- (3). Do you feel stressed in your day to day life? If yes, please elaborate the reasons.
- (4). If any, what are the after-effects of these activities on your body and mind?

Perception, culture and authenticity dimension

- (5). Is there any aspect of the yoga practice that makes you uncomfortable or an aspect you find unusual and do not feel like participating in?
- (6). How do you feel about chanting during the yoga practice?
- (7). Do you associate yogic techniques with a specific culture? If yes, please elaborate.
- (8). How authentic do you find the yoga that is taught in Norway?
- (9). How do you perceive yoga – as a sport workout or exercise, a spiritual practice or a religious practice?

Interview guide for service providers and instructors

Business dimension

- (1). How is the demand for complementary wellness activities, specifically yoga and meditation, in Norway?
- (2). What strategies do you employ to attract clients?
- (3). Are these activities proactively marketed or do clients seek these activities themselves?
- (4). How sustainable is the complementary wellness business in Norway?
- (5). What is the market segment for these activities?
- (6). Is there a gap between consumer interest and actual business?
- (7). How do you ensure service quality and authenticity of the activities?

Cultural dimension

- (8). Do you find any cultural conflicts with this business i.e. do clients accept only parts of these practices while rejecting others?
- (9). In your opinion, do clients perceive these activities as having a spiritual or religious affiliation?
- (10). Do clients understand the ideas and philosophy behind these activities?
- (11). How do clients respond to elements such as chanting and breath techniques?

Participant Profile Table

Number	Role	Gender	Age	Nationality
1	Client	Female	50	Norwegian
2	Client	Female	54	Norwegian
3	Client	Female	32	Venezuelan
4	Client	Male	29	Norwegian
5	Client	Female	25	Norwegian
6	Client	Female	27	Norwegian
7	Client	Female	24	Norwegian
8	Client	Female	28	Chinese
9	Client	Female	35	Chinese
10	Client	Female	31	Norwegian
11	Client	Male	25	Sri Lankan
12	Client	Female	40	Vietnamese
13	Client	Female	24	Norwegian
14	Client	Female	22	Norwegian
15	Client	Female	53	Norwegian
16	Client	Female	26	Norwegian
17	Client	Male	28	Russian
18	Client	Female	23	Polish
19	Client	Female	22	Norwegian
20	Client	Female	23	Norwegian
21	Client	Female	25	Norwegian
22	Client	Female	64	Norwegian
23	Client	Female	31	Lithuanian
24	Client	Male	27	Greek
25	Client	Male	22	Norwegian
26	Client	Male	31	Norwegian
27	Client	Female	25	Norwegian
28	Client	Female	24	Norwegian
29	Client	Male	30	Pakistani
30	Client	Male	31	Pakistani
31	Client	Male	25	Serbian
32	Client	Male	30	German
33	Client	Male	30	Azerbaijani
34	Client	Male	39	Norwegian
35	Client	Male	47	Iranian
36	Client	Male	32	Romanian
37	Gym Manager	Male	50	Norwegian
38	Instructor	Female	29	Indian
39	Yoga Studio Manager	Female	48	Norwegian
40	Gym Manager	Female	37	Norwegian
41	Instructor	Female	40	Norwegian
42	Yoga Studio Owner	Female	55	Norwegian
43	Instructor	Female	40	Norwegian
44	Instructor	Female	28	Indian
45	Instructor	Male	29	Norwegian