

IMAGE MANAGEMENT OF A PHYSICAL RECREATION INSTRUCTOR

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Abstract: The article addresses the issue of managing the image of a physical recreation instructor. It is necessary to undertake an analysis of the subject matter due to the dynamic development of physical recreation services, and significant competition in the provision of them. The article starts with discussing the concept of sport and its relation to the concept of physical recreation. Then, one of the forms of physical activity, namely hatha yoga, is discussed. Subsequently, the entities authorized to conduct physical recreation classes are presented, with particular focus on the physical recreation instructor, including the qualification requirements placed upon them, the tasks assigned, and the effects of their services. The article also discusses the results of surveys concerning the expectations of class participants towards instructors in terms of their professional qualifications, competencies and predispositions. Based on the survey results and the positions adopted in the literature, the methods for managing the image of a physical recreation instructor, including the legal risks of the instructor, are also presented. The article also draws attention to the possibility of adopting the academic yoga model in image management while discussing the assumptions and benefits accompanying this model.

Keywords: image management, physical recreation instructor, academic yoga.

1. Introduction

The sector of services in the field of physical recreation available on the market is developing dynamically. As a result, competition in the market of these services is growing. This in turn triggers the need for physical recreation providers to manage their image.

The objective of this article is, in particular, to discuss the issue of managing the image of a physical recreation instructor, being a professional provider of physical recreation activities in a particular specialization (i.e. hatha yoga). Attention will be drawn, among other things, to the issues concerning the professional qualifications and competencies of an instructor,

as well as their predispositions to pursue the occupation in question. What's more, the article will also address the issues related to the legal risk of a physical recreation instructor and their impact on the image management process. One of the models for managing the image of a physical recreation instructor in hatha yoga will also be presented, namely a model based on the assumptions and values of academic yoga. However, the considerations included in the article will begin with discussing the concept of sport and its relation to the concept of physical recreation.

Sport currently includes all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organized participation, have an impact on the development or improvement of physical and mental condition, the development of social relations, or the achievement of sports results at all levels. This definition of sport is contained in Art. 2 sec. 1 of the Sports Act of 25 June 2010. What is more, in accordance with sec. 1a of the said provision, competition based on intellectual activity which aims at achieving sports results shall also be considered sport. On the other hand, sport, together with physical education and physical rehabilitation, make up physical culture (Art. 2 sec. 2 of the said Act).

The above-mentioned concept of sport includes the concept of "physical recreation". The latter was previously regulated in the Act of 18 January 1996 on physical culture, which in Art. 3 item 8 provides that physical recreation is a form of physical activity, undertaken with the aim of rest and renewal of mental and physical capabilities. Thus, the purpose of physical activity undertaken within the meaning of the Act on physical culture was analogous to one of the objectives of physical activity provided for in the Sports Act. As indicated above, sport includes all forms of physical activity that bring results, for example in terms of mental condition. It can also be mentioned that the inclusion of physical recreation in the concept of sport, due to the broad approach to this concept by the legislator, is also indicated in the literature (Badura et al., 2011). What is more, in the very draft law on sport, it was pointed out that *The concept of physical recreation, isolated in the act on physical culture, is included in the broad definition of sport adopted in the draft act on sports* (Draft law on sports ...).

One of the forms of physical recreation currently covered by the Sports Act is yoga. As stated by M. Grabara, yoga is an ancient Indian system of physical exercises, consisting in slowly assuming a specific bodily posture, keeping that posture for a certain period of time, and then coming slowly out of the assumed posture. The postures assumed are called asanas, which denotes comfortable positions (Grabara, 2009). M. Grabara rightly remarks that yoga exercises do not constitute standard physical exercises. Their objective is to achieve better flexibility and agility. Moreover, they also result in significant health benefits for those who practice yoga (Grabara, 2009). J. Szopa points out that such exercises are aimed at achieving and maintaining the high mental efficiency of a person (Szopa, 2005), which corresponds to the definition of wellness (Krejčí, 2013). It is also assumed that yoga can be a form of improvement and preservation of health and agility (Sławek, and Śleboda, 2011, Roland, et al., 2011).

One of the existing paths of yoga, which is becoming more and more popular in Western countries, is hatha joga. It is based on a combination of different postures that relate to balance, strength and flexibility. Moreover, hatha yoga is based on the coordination of the "mind-body-breathing" system. Consequently, it is pointed out that it requires effort due to the need to maintain certain postures, as well as to control the body and breathing in a specific rhythm (Sławek, and Śleboda, 2011).

As mentioned above, one of the directional disciplines in which instructors of physical recreation lead classes is hatha yoga. Thus, instructors of physical recreation rank to so-called hatha yoga instructors.

The research conducted in connection with the preparation of this article and discussed in the follow-up is devoted to the profession of a yoga instructor. The aim of the study was, in particular, an analysis of the expectations that the trainers raise with instructors in terms of their professional qualifications and competencies.

It should be noted that carrying out the survey among people who were participants of classes conducted by an instructor dealing with a specific directional discipline enabled the precise attitude of respondents' to the questions addressed to them. The results of these studies, however, can be related appropriately to the general profession of a physical recreation instructor.

2. The entities authorized to conduct physical recreation classes

In accordance with Art. 41 of the Sports Act, a coach and a sports instructor are the entities authorized to conduct organized sports classes in a sports association or sports club participating in competitions organized by the Polish sports association.

The legislator accepted that one of the above-mentioned occupational titles can be applied for by a person aged 18 or more, who has at least general or sectoral secondary education, has the knowledge, experience and skills necessary to perform the tasks of a coach or a sports instructor, and was not convicted by a final judgement for intentional offence referred to in Art. 46-50, or specified in Chapters XIX, XXIII, with the exception of Art. 192 and Art. 193, Chapters XXV and XXVI of the Act of 6 June 1997 – Criminal Code.

In turn, the tasks of a coach and a sports instructor include, apart from conducting classes, passing on current theoretical and practical knowledge in the field of sports training and competition in a given discipline.

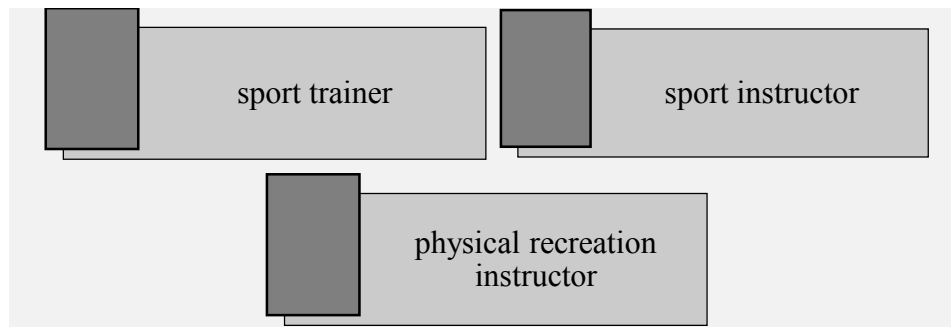


Figure 1. The entities authorized to conduct physical recreation classes. Source: authors' own elaboration.

At the same time, attention should be drawn to the fact of distinguishing the occupation of a physical recreation instructor in the Classification of Occupations and Specialities for the needs of the labour market, which constitutes an appendix to the Regulation of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy of 7 August 2014 with regard to the classification of occupations and specialities for the needs of the labour market and the scope of its application (as amended).

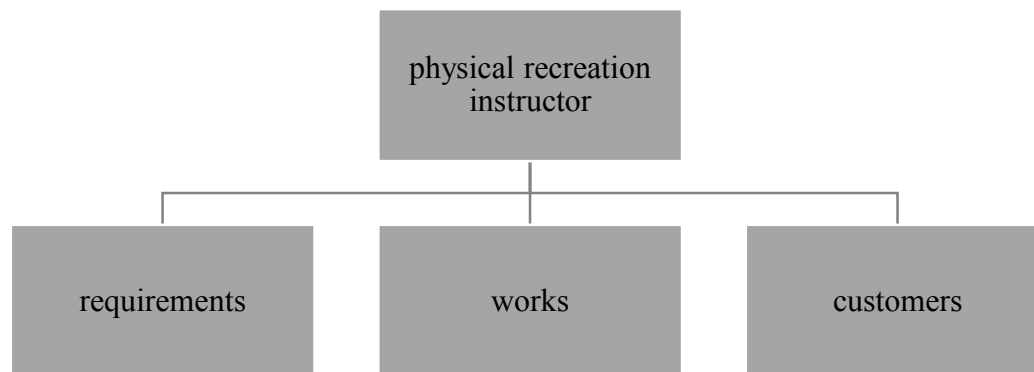


Figure 2. Physical recreation instructor – occupational characteristics. Source: authors' own elaboration.

According to the data contained in the National Occupational Standards of Competence, available on the website of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy (www.mpips.gov.pl), the occupation of physical recreation instructor was distinguished under number 342305. This occupation may be performed by a person aged 18 or more who has at least secondary education and good health status. It is pointed out that it is reasonable for a person seeking to pursue that occupation to complete a physical recreation instructor course in a given recreation speciality. It is a two-stage course, consisting of general and specialist parts. What is also important is that a candidate should pass practical and theoretical exams in order to confirm the acquired occupational competencies. It should also be mentioned that a person with an university degree in physical education and sports or tourism and recreation with an instructor's speciality in a specific discipline of physical recreation may become a physical recreation instructor.

In accordance with the description included in the National Occupational Standards of Competence, the profession of physical recreation instructor is of a service nature. The instructor's task is to conduct physical activities and to promote an active lifestyle. On the

other hand, the effect of classes is to maintain or improve the health and motor skills of class participants. The work of an instructor is also aimed at contributing to the strength recovery of class participants, their relaxation, and reduction of muscular tension associated with their work. In addition, the National Occupational Standards of Competence identify the following tasks of an instructor:

- diagnose the psycho-motor abilities of class participants,
- select recreational activities, taking into account the motor skills and needs of participants,
- plan recreational activities,
- conduct specialist recreational activities,
- keep documentation related to the effects and course of the classes,
- organize the work station in accordance with the principles of occupational health and safety, fire protection, ergonomics and environmental protection.

The classes conducted by a physical recreation instructor are characterised by a great diversity of participants in terms of sex, age, level of fitness, physical fitness and health.

Physical recreation instructors perform their tasks in clubs, recreation and sports centres run by institutions focused on health improvement, as well as in cultural centres, community centres and playgrounds. What is more, they are entitled to conduct recreational activities as part of holidays, as well as at camps and colonies.

3. Customer expectations regarding physical recreation instructors

In the context of the preparation of this article, survey studies were conducted among people practicing yoga for less than 6 months. The study was devoted to the ways of perceiving yoga instructors and the requirements placed on them by the respondents, in particular with regard to their education, qualifications, skills and predispositions. The group of respondents consisted of 50 people.

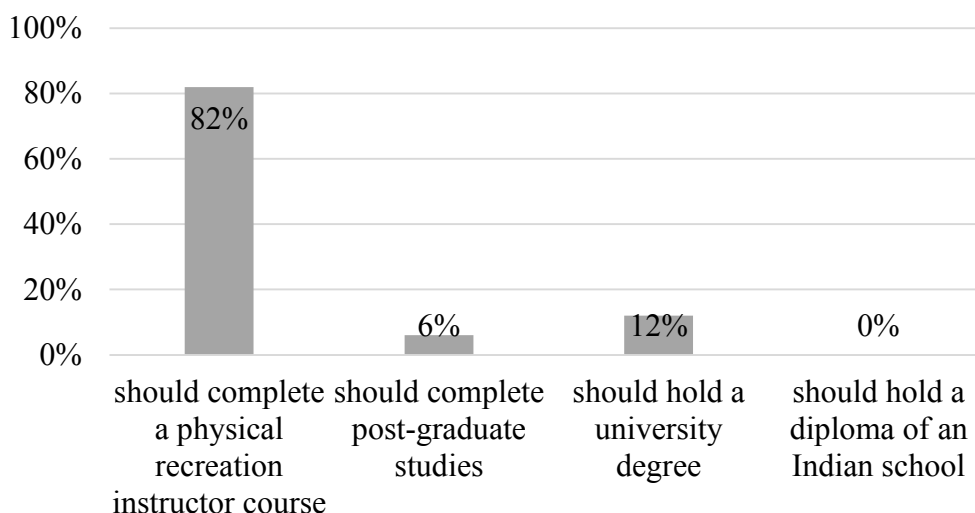


Figure 3. Requirements placed on yoga instructors in terms of occupational qualifications. Source: authors' own elaboration.

The results of the study with regard to the requirements placed on yoga instructors in terms of their occupational qualifications are presented in Figure 3. The study revealed that 82% of the respondents believe that a yoga instructor should complete a physical recreation instructor course. In contrast, 12% of the respondents stated that those who conduct yoga classes should hold a university degree in the field of physical education or physiotherapy. On the other hand, only 6% of the respondents indicated that a yoga instructor should complete post-graduate studies. None of the persons participating in the study indicated that a yoga instructor should hold a diploma from an Indian school.

Analyzing the results presented above, it can be concluded that a significant number of yoga class participants take note of whether an instructor has obtained education in the field of physical recreation (relevant courses completed). However, it is unimportant for the respondents whether the instructor completed an Indian school course.

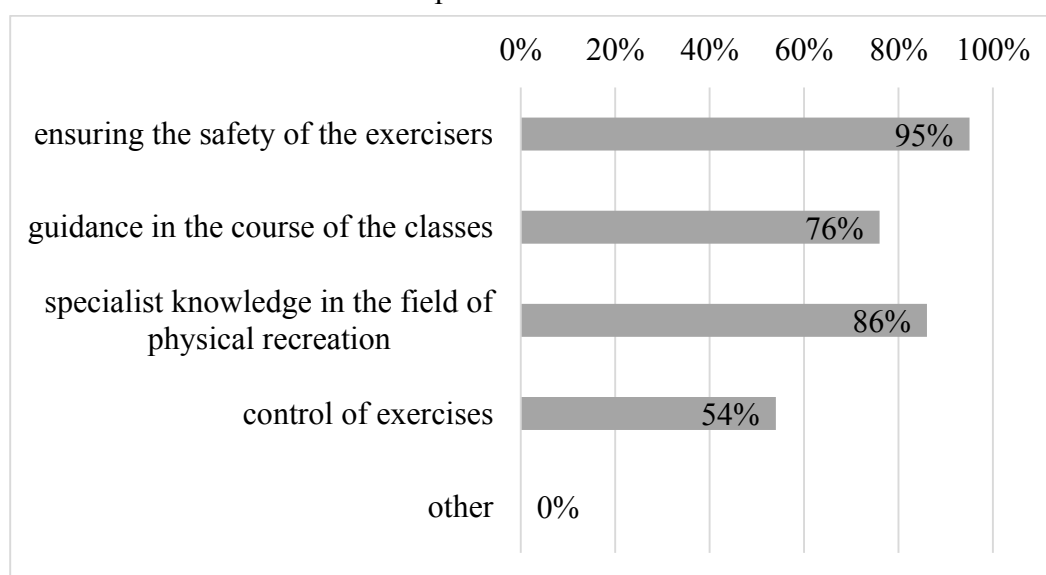


Figure 4. Requirements placed on yoga instructors in terms of qualifications. Source: authors' own elaboration.

Figure 4 illustrates the results of the study concerning the requirements placed on yoga class instructors in terms of their qualifications. It should be said at the outset that in the question referring to the subject matter, the respondents were given an opportunity to select multiple answers.

It was revealed in the survey that the qualifications that ensure the safety of exercises matter most to yoga class participants. This response was chosen by 95% of the respondents. It should be noted that, as clarified in the survey, ensuring safety should be understood as an ability to match exercises to the abilities of class participants, and first aid competencies.

Another important aspect is the specialist knowledge of an instructor in the field of physical recreation. This competence was indicated by 86% of the respondents.

In turn, according to 76% of the respondents, instructors should show guidance competencies when conducting the classes. Such competences include, among other things, an individual approach to class participants, motivating participants to perform exercises, giving tips, or making the activities more diversified.

Next, the respondents indicated that the competencies they require from an instructor include proper control of the exercises performed, including constructive criticism and correction of exercising errors (54% of the respondents).

With regard to the fact that safety related to the exercises performed is of the utmost significance for almost all class participants, it can be noted that it is rightly pointed out in the literature that a sense of security is one of the most universal values people are guided by (Sławek, Śleboda, 2011, Fiske, 2004).

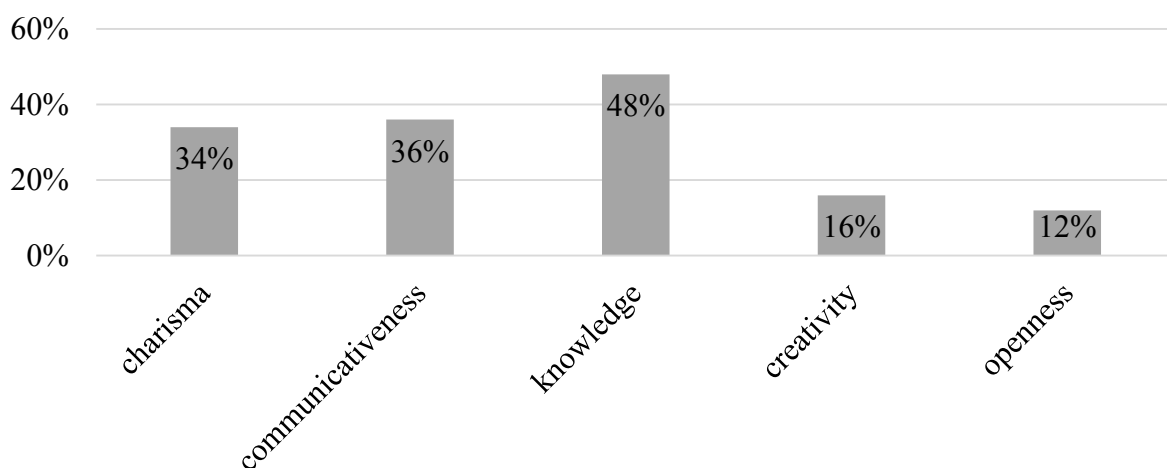


Figure 5. Requirements placed on yoga instructors in terms of predispositions. Source: authors' own elaboration.

With reference to the predispositions to be expected from a person conducting yoga classes, it should be pointed out that knowledge is particularly appreciated. This predisposition was indicated by nearly half of the respondents (48%). Here, consideration should also be given to the fact that the study results discussed above show that such knowledge is related to the completion of a physical recreation instructor course. A significant proportion of the

respondents do not require an instructor to complete higher education or postgraduate studies, nor hold a diploma from an Indian school.

The next predispositions indicated as desirable by the participants of the study were communicativeness (36%) and charisma (34%). Creativity and openness were indicated by 16% and 12% of the respondents.

The results of research in the area of predispositions that should be manifested by a yoga instructor are illustrated in Figure 5.

4. Image management of a physical recreation instructor

The existing literature on the subject indicates that image can be perceived as the sum of views, impressions and attitudes that a particular person or group has towards an object. Importantly, the object in question can be an enterprise, a product, a brand or a person (Sokołowicz et al., 2011; Barick, and Kotler, 1991).

Keeping in mind the above-mentioned definition of image, it can be stated that the image of a physical recreation instructor consists of all views, impressions and attitudes shown by his/her customers (including potential customers) in relation to him/her and his/her services.

It could also be mentioned that the literature correctly points out that image is not a faithful reflection of reality. This is because it emerges as a result of perception – a process which is undoubtedly characterised by the subjectivity of the perceiver (Dewalska-Opitek, 2010).

The study revealed that the customers expects an instructor to demonstrate professional knowledge in the field of physical recreation, provide appropriate guidance through the exercises, and supervise their execution, as well as ensure the safety of the participants in connection with the activities they undertake.

Therefore, all the above-mentioned requirements should be taken into account in the process of image management for a physical recreation instructor. It is particularly important for an instructor to self-improve in a given discipline and adhere to all the accompanying rules. Implementation of such assumptions in the process of image management will result in the perception of the instructor as a professional in a given field.

The above is also confirmed by the literature. As is rightly pointed out, an instructor is obliged to constantly acquire knowledge regarding the principles according to which a class should be run, the types of exercises, as well as the impact of these exercises on the human body. It is also necessary for the instructor to have significant knowledge of biological sciences, i.e. physiology, anatomy, biomechanics, as well as the human motor system. There is no doubt that an instructor is obliged to choose exercises and amounts thereof which are appropriate for a particular type of class or the level and ability of its participants. Moreover, the instructor must possess knowledge on how a given exercise should be performed in order to be correct,

on top of knowing why a given technique is correct. The instructor should also enforce the proper exercise form on the participants (Dix, et al., 2013; Cieślicka, et al., 2011; Napierała, et al., 2009).

When discussing issues related to image management for a physical recreation instructor, it is also impossible to overlook the fact that it is necessary for the instructor to have an appropriate predisposition for communication. This is also confirmed by the conducted survey. An ability to make precise and clear utterances allows the physical recreation instructor to correctly convey information, guidelines and instructions to the participants of his classes. This in fact is necessary in order to properly perform the exercises and understand the instructor's remarks and corrections, especially in relation to exercise techniques (Dix, et al., 2013).

Both the professional knowledge of the instructor and his/her communication and leadership predispositions influence the safety of the people performing the exercises and eliminate the potential negative effects of the activity they take up.

Keeping in mind the survey results, the fact that the image of a physical recreation instructor is also influenced by his/her other predispositions, such as creativity, charisma and openness, cannot be overlooked.

His/her attitude towards the participants of his/her classes is also important in the process of the image management for a physical recreation instructor because it is important for an instructor to be friendly and helpful to the participants, regardless of his/her personal issues (Dix, et al., 2013). A pleasant atmosphere in class, synonymous to the instructor's skill in this area, undoubtedly has an encouraging effect on the participants and increases their willingness to attend systematically (Nowak, and Chalimoniuk-Nowak, 2016). However, taking into account the fact that participants of the classes express a wish to rest from work and stressful situations, a negative attitude and an instructor's dissatisfaction may result not only in opting out of the services provided by a given instructor, but also abandoning the activity completely.

At this point it must be noted that the legal environment surrounding the physical recreation instructor also plays an important role in the process of their image management. The legal environment should be understood as all legal norms regarding the activity and services provided by the instructor. These norms relate to various branches of law, including civil law, intellectual property law, labour law, administrative law and tax law.

Considering the framework of this article, attention will be paid solely to issues related to civil law, namely the tort risk which lies with a physical recreation instructor. This risk is particularly related to an instructor's due diligence in performing his/her duties. Moreover, this risk is related to the possibility of charging the instructor with improper class management (malpractice).

In relation to the above, it should be pointed out that the instructor is able to avoid the risk involved, which, for example, may be understood as a resignation from providing the services,

or a reduction of this risk. In the latter case, the instructor should strive to minimise the risk of being charged with improper class management.

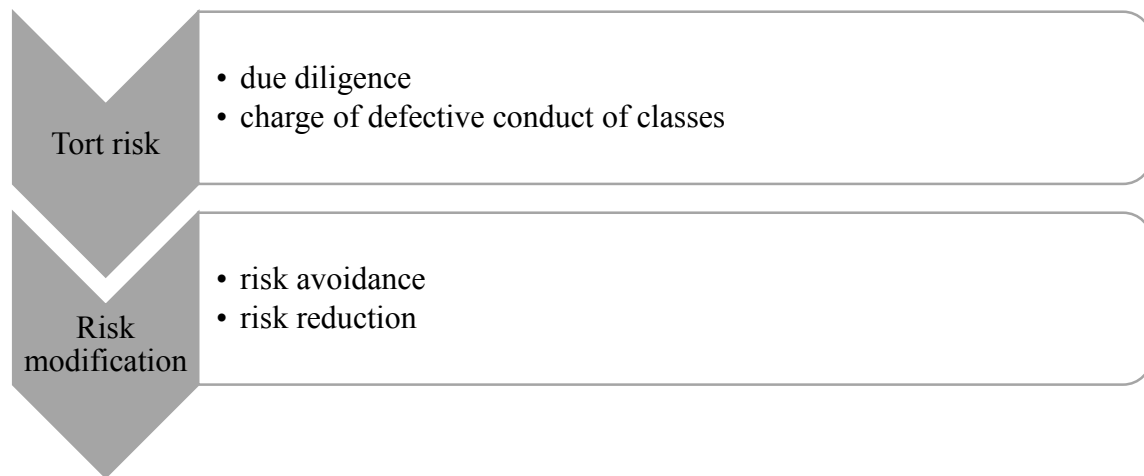


Figure 6. Tort risk and its modification. Source: authors' own elaboration.

Taking into account the factors affecting the image of a physical recreation instructor, including those connected to tort risk, it is worth paying attention to one of the yoga teaching models, namely academic yoga. J. Szopa and M. Dziadkiewicz point out that academic yoga is a body workout system based on relaxation techniques and hatha yoga physical exercises. Its aim is to maintain and improve psychophysical health. The methods used to work with the body and mind are measurable, repeatable and experimentally proven. What is important is that academic yoga is based on scientific achievements in such fields as anatomy, kinesiology, biochemistry, biology, biomechanics, philosophy, physiology, kinanthropometry, kinetic psychotherapy, physiotherapy, physical culture, medicine, neurophysiology, psychology, rehabilitation and sociology (Szopa, Dziadkiewicz).

According to the authors, it is justified to base the process of image management for a physical recreation instructor on the academic yoga model. This is because the assumptions of academic yoga steer away from the traditional market model of yoga based on the guru-student channel. Academic yoga is based on the following values:

- 1) focus on the health and safety of participants,
- 2) critical discussion,
- 3) freedom of opinion,
- 4) basing the message on scientific research,
- 5) utilisation of physical recreation methods which are repeatable and experimentally proven,
- 6) lack of ideological indoctrination.

The main assumption of academic yoga is to ensure the health and safety of the people participating in the exercises. Furthermore, as is clear from the above, the assumption of academic yoga is especially to enable the participants to partake in discussion and exchange of views on the exercises performed. What is also important is that the channel of communication

between the instructor and the participants is based on scientific research results, whilst the methods of physical recreation are repeatable and experimentally proven.

Bearing in mind the above, it can be pointed out that academic yoga instruction is based on three pillars.

The first and most important pillar is based on ensuring the health and safety of the participants. It is carried out through assessing the proposed class elements through the prism of participant safety standards developed by physical recreation science.

The second pillar is a process approach to class planning and teaching. It boils down to resigning from sport competitions and instead focusing on participation in classes, improvement of the psychophysical well-being of the participants, their self-acceptance and the development of social bonds between them.

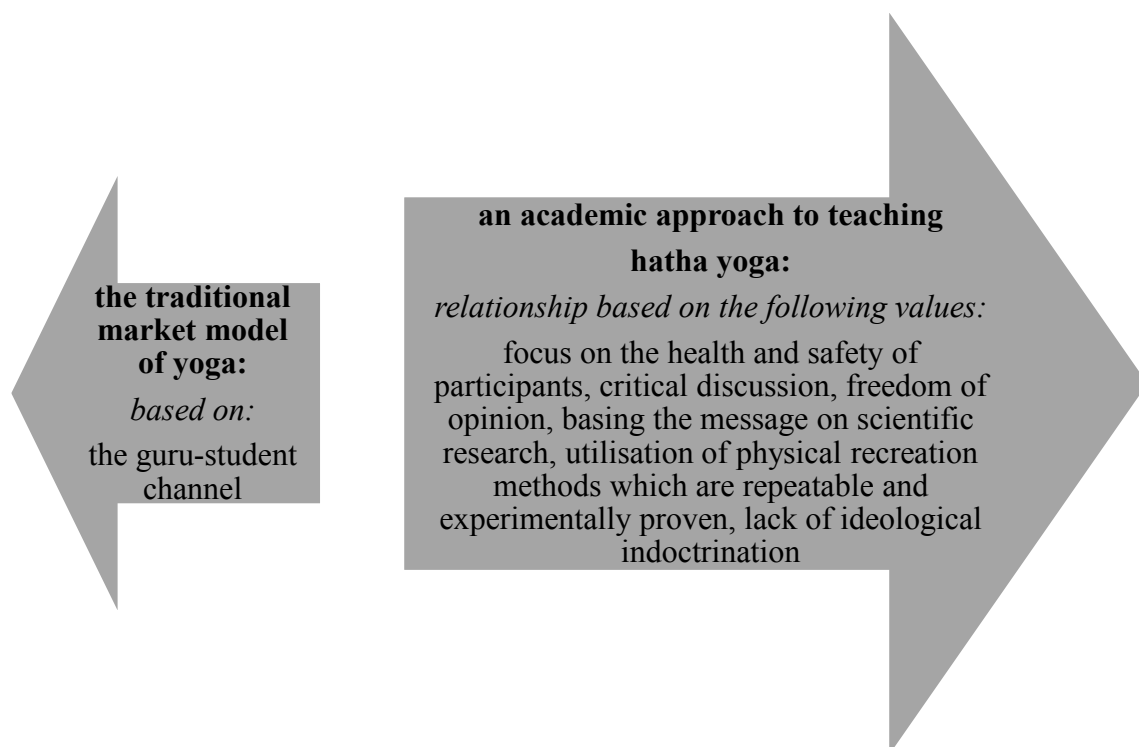


Figure 7. Models of yoga instruction. Source: authors' own elaboration.

At the same time the third pillar involves: allowing the academic framework of critical discussion on the method of class execution, tolerance for the views of the participants, involving openness to various "Indian" branches of yoga, basing the teachings on scientific research rather than the vision of teachers in charge of shaping individual Indian yoga branches, and also basing the teachings on the no ideological indoctrination principle.

5. Summary

According to the authors, assumptions regarding the image of a physical recreation instructor in accordance with the principles of academic yoga fulfil an important need of market participants, which is to ensure safe classes of simultaneously high quality. Furthermore, these assumptions defy the stereotypes associated with hatha yoga instruction, related to the cultural otherness of the areas where yoga was created, as well as the surrounding ideology.

The assumptions of academic yoga make it an active strategy for minimising the legal risk associated with the tort liability of a physical recreation instructor. This is because it satisfies the condition of due diligence as defined by Art. 355 in conjunction with Art. 471 of the Civil Code, in particular by meeting the participants' health and safety standards, as well as protecting the dignity and psychophysical integrity of the participants, in addition to implementing procedures aimed at the constant improvement of service quality in accordance with the methodology of physical recreation.

The use of academic yoga assumptions in managing the image of a physical recreation instructor should result in further research in this area. Research should be devoted in particular to the satisfaction and pleasure of participants of the classes, which will be conducted by instructors with qualifications and predispositions which are consistent with the expectations hitherto revealed. The subject of further research may be aspects of the legal risk of instructors' activity, including regarding the number of cases of liability for tort incurred by these instructors.

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