

IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS TOURISM ON LOCAL ECONOMY IN CITIES OF UTTAR PRADESH

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Abstract— This dissertation examines the economic impact of religious tourism in Uttar Pradesh, focusing on key cities like Varanasi, Ayodhya, and Mathura. It highlights how tourism drives growth in sectors such as hospitality, transport, and handicrafts while supporting local employment and cultural preservation. The study also addresses challenges like infrastructure gaps and unequal benefit distribution. Through comparative analysis, it offers policy recommendations to promote sustainable and inclusive development in religious tourism hubs.

Index Terms— Religious Tourism, Economic Development, Cultural Preservation, Employment Generation, Sustainable Growth.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND:

Religious tourism is a significant driver of cultural preservation, social interaction, and economic growth, especially in regions enriched with diverse ethnic communities. In Uttar Pradesh, religious tourism is a vital component of the local economy, with cities like Varanasi, Ayodhya, and Vrindavan attracting millions of pilgrims annually. These activities stimulate various sectors such as hospitality, retail, transportation, and handicrafts, creating a robust impact on the livelihoods of ethnic communities.

This dissertation explores the economic implications of religious tourism on the local economies of ethnic communities in Uttar Pradesh. It assesses how infrastructure development, employment generation, and revenue growth are interlinked with the influx of pilgrims and tourists. By analyzing distinct categories of tourist cities based on footfall and population, this study aims to identify opportunities and challenges in enhancing local economies. Furthermore, it seeks to propose actionable guidelines for optimizing economic benefits while preserving the cultural and spiritual integrity of these communities.

1.2 NEED OF STUDY :

Religious tourism plays a significant role in the economic development of cities, particularly in regions like Uttar Pradesh, where religion and culture are central to local identity. Cities like Varanasi, Mathura, and Ayodhya attract millions of religious tourists annually, yet the economic impact of this tourism has often been overlooked in urban and economic planning.

This dissertation aims to explore how religious tourism influences the local economy of these cities like Varanasi, Ayodhya and Mathura.

The need for this study arises from the growing significance of religious tourism as a driver of local economies.

It generates direct benefits through spending on accommodation, transport, and food, while also contributing to employment, infrastructure development, and the growth of industries like hospitality and retail. By identifying key parameters such as the number of religious sites and tourist visits, this research will explore how these factors impact economic growth. Additionally, the comparative analysis will help identify best practices to enhance religious tourism's contribution to sustainable economic development.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH DESIGN

2.1 AIM:

The Aim of this dissertation is to identify the parameter of religious tourism and its impact on local economy .

2.2 OBJECTIVE:

1. TO IDENTIFY THE LOCAL ECONOMY OF THE RELIGIOUS CITY HAVING TOURISM POTENTIAL -
 - Study the economic structure and key sectors benefiting from religious tourism,
 - Analyze employment patterns and revenue streams generated by tourism activities.
2. TO IDENTIFY AND STUDY THE PARAMETER OF RELIGIOUS TOURISM AND LOCAL ECONOMY IN THESE CITIES –
 - Assess the significance of pilgrimage sites, events, and festivals in attracting visitors.
 - Examine tourism infrastructure, such as accommodations, transport, public amenities, etc.
3. TO FIND OUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARAMETER OF LOCAL ECONOMY OF THE CITIES –
 - Analyze the correlation between tourist footfall and local business growth.
 - Study the direct impact of tourism on income generation and employment in the region.
4. TO LINK THE PARAMETER OF RELIGIOUS TOURISM WITH PARAMETER OF LOCAL ECONOMY POTENTIAL THROUGH COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS –
 - Compare data on tourism parameters (footfall, events) with economic indicators (revenue, employment).
 - Develop a framework to identify and strengthen the connection between tourism and economic growth..

2.3 SCOPE :

1. The study will focus on selected religious tourism cities in Uttar Pradesh, categorized based on tourism footfall and population, to assess their economic potential.
2. The research will emphasize the impact of religious tourism on local ethnic communities, analyzing their participation in key economic sectors such as hospitality, retail, transportation, and handicrafts, etc.
3. The study relies exclusively on secondary data sourced from government publications, tourism department reports, municipal records, and other documented sources to analyze economic patterns and trends.
4. The research compares the economic impact of religious tourism across the selected cities to identify common patterns and unique trends.

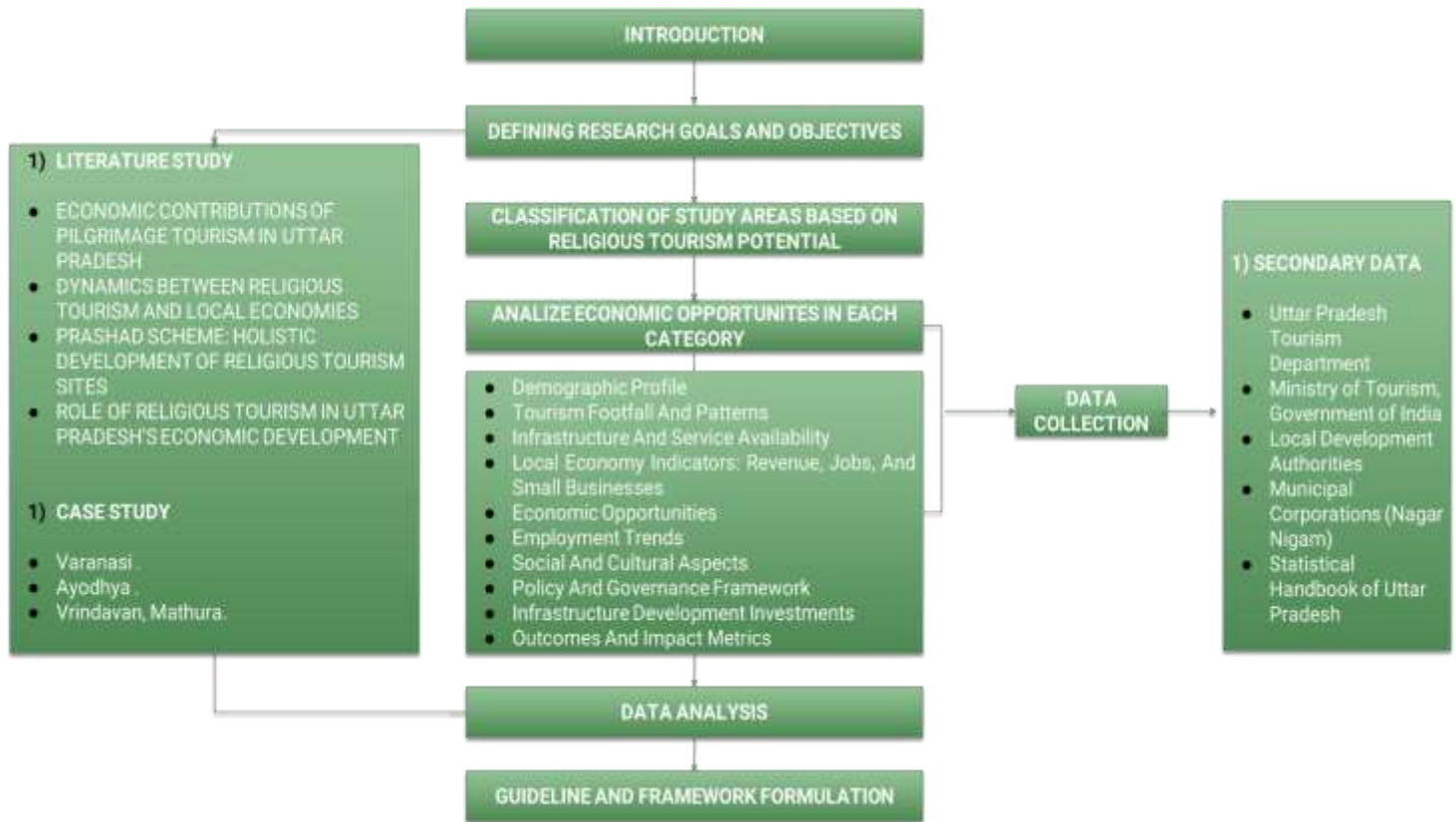
2.4 LIMITATION:

1. The research may be limited by the selection of religious tourism cities and the categories analyzed, which could affect the generalizability of the findings to all religious tourism destinations in Uttar Pradesh.
2. The findings may not capture real-time changes or recent developments in tourism patterns or the local economy, as secondary data can be outdated or incomplete.
3. Interpretation of the data may involve subjective judgment, as certain economic relationships or impacts may not be explicitly quantified in the available reports

2.6 METHODOLOGY:

The methodology involves setting aim, objectives, and background study followed by a literature study and selecting case studies. Identifying Contributing factors and effects of Regional disparity in industrial development. And find sustainable strategies to reduce the disparity and focusing toward balanced industrial growth.

Figure 1 Methodology



Source: Author

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE STUDY

3.1 LITERATURE STUDY MATRIX

Table 1: Literature Study Matrix

Sr. No.	Type of Literature	Name of Book/Research Paper/Journal	Author/ Publication & References	Objectives	Tools/ Parameters	Inferences
Economic Contributions of Pilgrimage Tourism in India						
1	Research Paper	Economic Contributions of Pilgrimage Tourism in India	Dhamija, R. (2020). Journal of Tourism Economics	To analyse the economic impact of religious tourism on local communities, focusing on employment, revenue generation and infra development.	Statistical data analysis of tourist and revenue trends.	The economic impact of religious tourism on local communities in Uttar Pradesh is primarily driven by the influx of pilgrims, infrastructure development initiatives, and tourism-related activities, such as temple renovations, transportation upgrades, and festival-driven revenue growth.
				To assess the role local ethnic communities in contributing to the economic outcome of religious tourism.	Comparative analysis of employment metrics across different sector.	Local ethnic communities play a critical role in the economic outcomes of religious tourism, with their involvement in sectors like hospitality, retail, and cultural services significantly influencing employment metrics and revenue generation.
				To assess tourism pattern to identify city-specific characteristics	Assessment of infrastructure and services supporting religious tourism.	Limited and inconsistent infrastructure development in religious tourism cities hampers their ability to fully capitalize on their tourism potential, directly affecting the visitor experience and local economic outcomes.
						Inadequate planning and uneven distribution of services in religious tourism hubs lead to disparities in city-specific characteristics, impacting the effectiveness of infrastructure and services in supporting sustainable tourism growth.

Sr. No.	Type of Literature	Name of Book/Research Paper/Journal	Author/ Publication & References	Objectives	Tools/ Parameters	Inferences
Religious Tourism and Local Economy Dynamics						
2	Research Paper	Religious Tourism and Local Economy Dynamics	Dr. Rajiv Sharma and Dr. Anjali Gupta, Indian Journal of Tourism Studies, Volume 5, Issue 3, 2021	To evaluate how religious tourism drives the growth of small-scale businesses in key pilgrimage destinations in Uttar Pradesh.	Analyze revenue trends of small-scale businesses during peak and off-season periods to identify growth patterns and key contributing factors.	To evaluate how religious tourism drives the growth of small-scale businesses in key pilgrimage destinations in Uttar Pradesh.
				To examine the role of employment opportunities generated by religious tourism across different economic sectors, such as hospitality, retail, and transportation.	Conduct a comparative analysis of employment data across hospitality, retail, and transportation sectors to evaluate job creation trends and sectoral dependencies.	Employment opportunities in sectors like hospitality and retail flourish during tourist seasons, but the concentration in these periods limits year-round economic stability.
				To analyze the challenges and limitations faced by small businesses and local communities in sustaining economic growth driven by religious tourism	Utilize secondary data from government publications and case studies to assess infrastructure inadequacies, economic disparities, and policy gaps affecting sustainability.	Seasonal fluctuations in tourism footfall create inconsistencies in revenue and job availability, impacting the sustainability of small businesses. Infrastructure gaps and limited access to resources for smaller stakeholders hinder the equitable distribution of benefits from religious tourism.

Sr. No.	Type of Literature	Name of Book/Research Paper/Journal	Author/ Publication & References	Objectives	Tools/ Parameters	Inferences
PRASHAD Scheme: Holistic Development of Religious Tourism Sites						
3	Government Report	PRASHAD Scheme: Holistic Development of Religious Tourism Sites	Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2020	To assess the role of the PRASHAD scheme in improving infrastructure and accessibility in key religious tourism destinations in India.	Analysis of infrastructure development reports and accessibility enhancements at religious sites.	The PRASHAD scheme has significantly improved infrastructure and accessibility, leading to enhanced tourist experiences and increased footfall in key religious sites.
				To evaluate the impact of government initiatives on boosting tourism growth and local economic development in religious sites.	Examination of tourism growth statistics and revenue generation trends post-implementation of the PRASHAD scheme.	Government initiatives under the PRASHAD scheme have successfully boosted tourism growth and contributed to economic development, particularly through improved facilities and services for visitors.
				To identify challenges in equitable distribution of benefits to local communities and stakeholders under the PRASHAD scheme.	Evaluation of government policy documents, case studies, and secondary data to analyze disparities in resource allocation and benefit distribution among local stakeholders.	Inequities in benefit distribution remain a challenge, with smaller stakeholders often sidelined in favor of larger, well-established entities. Resource allocation under the PRASHAD scheme lacks uniformity, resulting in disparities in economic outcomes for local communities.

Sr. No.	Type of Literature	Name of Book/Research Paper/Journal	Author/ Publication & References	Objectives	Tools/ Parameters	Inferences
Role of Religious Tourism in Uttar Pradesh's Economic Development						
4	Journal Article	Role of Religious Tourism in Uttar Pradesh's Economic Development	Indian Journal of Development Studies, 2020)	To examine the processes and implementation strategies of religious tourism initiatives contributing to local economic development in Uttar Pradesh.	Analysis of government policy documents and implementation frameworks to evaluate their effectiveness in driving economic outcomes.	Effective implementation of religious tourism initiatives has enhanced the integration of local businesses, but inconsistent strategies often hinder equitable economic growth.
				To evaluate the impact of infrastructure development on enhancing tourism-driven economic growth.	Review of infrastructure development data, including transportation, sanitation, and public utilities, to assess their influence on tourism statistics.	Infrastructure improvements under religious tourism projects have significantly boosted accessibility and visitor experience, directly contributing to local economic growth.
				To assess the employment opportunities created by religious tourism across key sectors.	Examination of secondary employment data from key sectors such as hospitality, retail, and transportation to analyze job creation patterns.	Religious tourism creates substantial employment opportunities in hospitality, retail, and transportation sectors during peak seasons. Seasonal fluctuations in tourism limit long-term job stability and year-round employment opportunities for local communities.

Source: Author

3.2 INFERENCES OF LITERATURE STUDY

3.2.1 Economic Contribution of Pilgrimage Tourism in India

1. Scale and Scope of Economic Impact - Religious tourism significantly impacts local economies in Uttar Pradesh, driven by consistent tourist footfall and associated activities such as temple renovations, transportation upgrades, and festival-driven revenue growth.
2. Role of Ethnic Communities - Local ethnic communities are central to economic outcomes, contributing through their involvement in hospitality, retail, and cultural sectors, thereby influencing employment metrics and revenue generation.
3. Infrastructure Gaps and Planning Limitations - The condition of physical and social infrastructure at resettlement sites was often substandard. Essential facilities like anganwadis (for child welfare), health sub-centers, and waste management services were often missing, inactive, or poorly managed, contributing to unsanitary living conditions.
4. Economic Disparities and Access Issues - Despite significant contributions from religious tourism, disparities in resource distribution and limited access to opportunities for smaller stakeholders restrict equitable economic benefits across communities.

3.2.2 Religious Tourism and Local Economy Dynamics

1. Impact on Small-Scale Business Growth - Religious tourism significantly boosts the growth of small-scale businesses by increasing demand for goods and services during peak tourist seasons. Local businesses such as souvenir shops, eateries, and transport providers benefit directly from the influx of tourists, contributing to the economic vitality of religious tourism hubs. However, these businesses often struggle to sustain growth in off-peak seasons.
2. Sectorial Employment Trends - Religious tourism generates substantial employment opportunities, particularly in the hospitality, retail, and transportation sectors. These jobs are critical for supporting the local economy but are often seasonal, with employment levels fluctuating based on tourist footfall. This dependency on seasonality creates challenges for workers seeking stable, year-round income.
3. Challenges in Economic Sustainability - Despite the benefits, small businesses and local communities face significant challenges, including inadequate infrastructure and uneven resource distribution. Poor transportation networks, limited public amenities, and unequal access to financial and logistical support hinder their ability to scale operations and maintain long-term economic growth.
4. Dependency on Seasonal Footfall - The heavy reliance on peak tourism seasons for revenue generation results in economic instability during off-seasons. Many small businesses and workers struggle to maintain their livelihoods when tourist footfall declines, highlighting the need for strategies to promote year-round tourism and reduce seasonal vulnerabilities.

3.2.3 PRASHAD Scheme: Holistic Development of Religious Tourism Sites

1. Impact on Small-Scale Business Growth - The PRASHAD scheme has significantly enhanced infrastructure and accessibility at religious tourism sites, leading to improved tourist experiences and increased footfall. This demonstrates the effectiveness of targeted government initiatives in boosting tourism-driven development.
2. Economic Growth - Government efforts under the scheme have boosted local economies by increasing tourism-related revenue and creating opportunities for employment in hospitality and retail sectors. However, these benefits are often unevenly distributed among stakeholders.
3. Challenges in Equitable Distribution - Despite its achievements, the scheme faces challenges in ensuring equitable benefit-sharing among local communities. Smaller stakeholders and ethnic communities are often overshadowed by larger entities, highlighting the need for inclusive policy adjustments to ensure sustained economic growth for all.

3.2.4 Role of Religious Tourism in Uttar Pradesh's Economic Development

1. Implementation Strategies - The PRASHAD scheme has significantly enhanced infrastructure and accessibility at religious tourism sites, leading to improved tourist experiences and increased footfall. This demonstrates the effectiveness of targeted government initiatives in boosting tourism-driven development.
2. Impact of Infrastructure Development - Infrastructure improvements, such as transport connectivity and public amenities, have enhanced visitor experiences and directly contributed to economic growth in religious tourism hubs.

3. Economic Contributions - Religious tourism drives significant employment opportunities in sectors like hospitality and retail during peak seasons, although challenges persist in ensuring year-round economic stability.
4. Equity and Resource Distribution - Resource allocation remains uneven, with smaller stakeholders often unable to access the full benefits of tourism-driven economic development, necessitating more inclusive policies.

3.4 CASE STUDY:

The Case studies provide valuable insights into challenges, opportunities, and successful practices, enabling a comprehensive analysis of their relevance in the Indian context.

3.4.1 Real-Time Economic Impact of Religious Tourism in Varanasi

3.4.1.1 Introduction:

Varanasi, also known as Kashi or Banaras, is one of the most ancient cities in the world and a prominent religious destination in Uttar Pradesh, India. Known as the "City of Lord Shiva," it is home to the sacred Kashi Vishwanath Temple and over 2,000 other temples, 88 ghats, and the historic Buddhist site of Sarnath. Religious tourism in Varanasi attracts millions of pilgrims and tourists annually, contributing significantly to the local economy through diverse sectors like hospitality, retail, transportation, and cultural services.

In this case study, we examine the Impact of the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor Project, an infrastructural and tourism-centric initiative that has transformed the religious tourism landscape in Varanasi.

3.4.1.2 Location :

Varanasi, also known as Kashi or Banaras, is situated in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. It is located on the western bank of the River Ganges, which is considered one of the most sacred rivers in Hinduism. The city lies at an approximate latitude of 25.3176° N and longitude of 82.9739° E, at an elevation of 80.71 meters above sea level.

3.4.1.3 Geographical Significance & Spiritual Importance:

Varanasi is regarded as the spiritual capital of India and holds immense importance for Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains. It is one of the oldest continually inhabited cities in the world, symbolizing timeless religious and cultural heritage. The Ganges River, flowing through the city, is central to religious rituals such as the Ganga Aarti, cremations, and purification ceremonies.

Cultural and Historical Hub: The city is home to over 2,000 temples, 88 ghats, and Sarnath, where Lord Buddha delivered his first sermon. Its historic lanes, vibrant markets, and Banarasi silk weaving tradition make it a significant cultural destination.

Geostrategic Location: Positioned in the Indo-Gangetic Plain, Varanasi serves as a focal point for trade, transportation, and tourism in northern India. It connects eastern and western India through well-developed transport corridors.

3.4.1.4 Religious Significance:

- **Abode of Lord Shiva:** Varanasi is considered the holiest city in Hinduism, believed to have been established by Lord Shiva himself.
- **Moksha: Liberation from the Cycle of Rebirth:** Hindus believe that dying in Varanasi ensures Moksha (liberation from the cycle of birth and rebirth).
- **The Ganges River:** The sacred Ganges River flows through Varanasi, offering purification through bathing and immersion of ashes.
- **Thousands of Temples:** Home to countless temples, including the iconic Kashi Vishwanath Temple dedicated to Lord Shiva.

3.4.1.5 Varanasi Tourism Potential: Tapestry of Crafts are GI Tagged Government of UP:

- **Varanasi Glass Beads**

Image showcasing a dazzling array of colorful glass beads, ranging from small intricate designs to larger, statement pieces.

- **Varanasi Soft Stone Jali**

A close-up image highlighting the delicate and intricate carvings on a piece of soft stone jali, showcasing the artistry and craftsmanship involved.

- Varanasi Wooden Lacquer Ware & Toys:

Featuring a selection of beautifully crafted wooden toys and idol items, showcasing the intricate designs this traditional art form.

- Benaras Brocades and Sarees Logo (Handicraft):

Intricate gold and silver threads woven into a luxurious Benarasi silk saree, highlighting the craftsmanship and opulence of this iconic textile.

3.4.1.6 Revenue distribution of Varanasi

Sector	Description	Approx. Share (%)
Pilgrimage Sites and Festivals	Revenue from temple donations, religious rituals, and income during festivals like Dev Deepawali and Ganga Aarti.	35%-45%
Handicrafts and Artisanal Goods	Income from Banarasi Silk Sarees (GI-tagged) and Varanasi Glass Beads (new GI-tag), including exports.	25%-30%
Hospitality and Accommodation	Earnings from hotels, guesthouses, and ashrams catering to tourists and pilgrims.	15%-20%
Retail and Local Markets	Sales from street vendors, souvenirs, religious items, brassware, carpets, and Gulabi Meenakari (GI-tagged).	10%-15%
Food and Beverage Industry	Revenue from traditional eateries and local delicacies like Kachori-Sabzi, Banarasi Paan, and Thandai.	5%-10%
Transportation and Logistics	Earnings from local transport (rickshaws, boats) and inter-city travel (railways, buses, and flights).	10%-13%
Government and Private Investments	Income from public development schemes (e.g., PRASHAD) and private tourism ventures.	5%-8%

3.4.1.7 INFERENCES :

- Varanasi's Soul is Tied to Tourism: Pilgrimage forms the heart of Varanasi's economy, with festivals like Dev Deepawali bringing a surge of visitors and prosperity.
- Craftsmanship Keeps the City Vibrant: Traditional crafts, like Banaras silk and the unique Varanasi Glass Beads, support local artisans and attract global attention.
- Hospitality Welcomes the World: The city thrives on providing comfortable stays for pilgrims and tourists, fueling employment and investment.
- Local Markets Thrive on Tourist Footfall: Street vendors and small businesses flourish as visitors explore the city and purchase souvenirs.
- Food and Transport: Everyday Life and Experiences: From street food to boat rides, these sectors connect visitors to the pulse of Varanasi.
- Investments Shape the Future: Government initiatives and private ventures are crucial for modernizing the city and ensuring sustainable tourism growth.

S. No.	Month	Indian	Foreigner	Total
1	January, 2023	11230404	19265	11249659
2	February, 2023	9992267	25141	10017408
3	March, 2023	13933111	24794	13957905
4	April, 2023	7998583	16022	8014605
5	May, 2023	4851077	10371	4861448
6	June, 2023	2072701	898	2073599
7	July, 2023	12646479	24260	12670739
8	August, 2023	31800391	14397	31814788
9	September, 2023	5895192	12024	5907216
10	October, 2023	8175275	18779	8194054
11	November, 2023	18068194	33847	18102041
12	December, 2023	2519093	23165	2542258

Indian Travelers Lead the Way:

- It's clear that Indians are the driving force behind tourism here. Their numbers consistently outshine foreign visitors, highlighting the importance of domestic travel to this destination.

A Season for Every Traveler:

- The numbers tell a story of how visitor interest ebbs and flows throughout the year.
- The latter part of the year seems to be a magnet for tourists, perhaps due to pleasant weather, festive seasons, or holiday schedules.
- Conversely, the monsoon months witness a dip in visitor numbers, likely due to weather conditions.

A Steady Stream of Foreign Guests:

- While Indian tourism shows significant fluctuations, foreign visitor numbers remain relatively stable throughout the year. This suggests a consistent appeal to international travelers, perhaps driven by unique cultural or historical attractions.

Category	Details
Primary Economic Drivers	Tourism, religious tourism, and pilgrimage activities (Kashi Vishwanath Temple, Ganga Aarti).
Tourism Contribution to GDP	Significant contribution, estimated to be around 15%-20% of the city's economy.
Employment	Approximately 30%-40% of jobs in Varanasi are directly or indirectly linked to tourism.
Revenue from Local Businesses	Handicrafts (Banarasi silk), souvenirs, religious artifacts, hotels, and eateries.
Accommodation Sector	Hotels, guest houses, and homestays primarily cater to tourists (varied price range).
Transportation Sector	Local transport thrives due to tourism: autos, cycle rickshaws, and rental vehicles.
Development of Public Infrastructure	Improved roads, ghats (riverfront), sanitation, and the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor project.
Local Market Dynamics	Heavy reliance on religious tourism; seasonal fluctuations (festivals, pilgrimages).
Key Industries Supporting Economy	Banarasi silk weaving, brassware, and the cottage industry.

Revenue Growth

- Post-implementation of the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor Project, tourism revenue grew by 66.67% from ₹1,500 crore in 2019 to ₹2,500 crore in 2021.
- The corridor contributed to 15-20% higher spending per tourist, with average spending increasing from ₹3,500 to ₹4,200 per visit.

Employment Generation**Direct Employment:**

- Tourism and hospitality sector: 25,000 jobs (2021).
- Retail and food services: 10,000 jobs (2021).

Indirect Employment:

- Artisans and weavers (Banarasi sarees): 8,000 jobs.
- Boatmen and transport services: 5,000 jobs.
- Seasonal employment during festivals like Mahashivratri and Dev Deepawali saw a 25% increase in temporary jobs.

Infrastructure Growth

- Kashi Vishwanath Corridor Project (2021): Cost: ₹800 crore.
- Added 50,000 sq. meters of redeveloped space, including wider pathways, sanitation facilities, and resting areas.
- Improved connectivity to the River Ganges, enabling smoother movement for over 50,000 daily visitors during peak seasons.

Transportation Upgrades:

- Airport passenger traffic increased by 23% annually.
- Railways introduced additional 12 trains on pilgrimage circuits.

3.4.2 Real-Time Economic Impact of Religious Tourism in Varanasi**3.4.2.1 Introduction:**

Ayodhya, revered as one of the seven sacred cities (Saptapuri) in Hinduism, stands as a testament to India's rich religious and cultural heritage. This ancient city, believed to be over 9,000 years old, holds paramount significance as the birthplace of Lord Ram and the setting of the epic Ramayana.

Situated on the banks of the Sarayu River in Uttar Pradesh, Ayodhya has evolved from a historical kingdom to a major pilgrimage center attracting millions of devotees annually.

The city's landscape is dotted with numerous temples, Ghats, and religious monuments that narrate tales of its glorious past. In recent years, Ayodhya has witnessed unprecedented development in its religious tourism infrastructure, particularly with the construction of the Ram Mandir, transforming it into a modern pilgrimage destination while preserving its ancient spiritual essence.

This harmonious blend of tradition and development has positioned Ayodhya as a significant contributor to religious tourism in Uttar Pradesh, impacting both the local economy and cultural preservation.

3.4.2.2 Location:

Ayodhya is situated in the state of Uttar Pradesh, along the banks of the sacred Sarayu River, at 26.7°N 82.2°E. The city serves as the headquarters of Ayodhya district (previously Faizabad) and lies approximately 130 kilometers east of Lucknow, the state capital. Located at an elevation of 93 meters above sea level, the city spreads across an area of approximately 10.24 square kilometers.

3.4.2.2 Geographical Significance:**River System:**

The Sarayu River, a tributary of the Ghaghara River, forms the geographical and spiritual lifeline of Ayodhya. The riverfront Ghats play a crucial role in religious activities and tourism.

Topography:

The city is characterized by a relatively flat terrain with gentle undulations, typical of the Gangetic plain. This topography has historically facilitated urban development and pilgrimage accessibility.

3.4.2.3 Religious Significance:

Birthplace of Lord Rama: The primary reason for Ayodhya's religious importance is its association with Lord Rama. Hindus believe that Lord Rama was born in Ayodhya, and the city is filled with temples and sacred sites dedicated to him.

The Ramayana: The epic Ramayana, one of the most revered texts in Hinduism, narrates the life and deeds of Lord Rama. Ayodhya is an integral part of this epic, and many of its events, such as Lord Rama's coronation and his exile, are believed to have taken place here.

Other Religious Sites: Apart from the Ram Janmabhoomi temple, Ayodhya is home to several other significant religious sites, including the Hanuman Garhi temple, the Kanak Bhawan temple, and the Nageshwarnath temple.

3.4.2.4 Monthly Domestic & Foreign Tourists Statistics of Year 2023

S. No.	Month	Indian	Foreigner	Total
1	January, 2023	959208	175	959383
2	February, 2023	1095058	156	1095214
3	March, 2023	1698260	149	1698409
4	April, 2023	1376144	110	1376254
5	May, 2023	1459432	281	1459713
6	June, 2023	1792508	190	1792698
7	July, 2023	1563327	30	1563357
8	August, 2023	5188553	272	5188825
9	September, 2023	5242273	271	5242544
10	October, 2023	10392900	2709	10395609
11	November, 2023	16399308	1198	16400506
12	December, 2023	15834641	3023	15837664
Total	63001612	8564	63010176	

3.4.2.5 ANNUAL TOURIST FOOTFALL OF 5 YEARS:

Year	Indian Visitors	Foreign Visitors	Total Visitors
2017	283084	1215	284299
2018	317253	1292	318545
2019	340967	1365	342332
2020	173356	174	173530
2021	283205	0	283208

3.4.2.6 INFERENCES:

Dominance of Domestic Tourism:

The overwhelming majority of visitors to Ayodhya Region are Indian nationals. This highlights the significance of domestic religious tourism in driving visitor numbers.

Foreign tourist arrivals, while important, constitute a relatively small percentage of the overall visitor count.

Seasonal Fluctuations:

There are significant seasonal variations in visitor numbers.

Peak Season:

October and November witness a surge in visitors, likely due to religious festivals and favorable weather conditions.

Off-Season:

July and August generally see a decline in visitor numbers, possibly due to the monsoon season and higher temperatures.

August as a Potential Outlier:

August shows a significant spike in Indian visitors compared to other months. This could be attributed to a specific event, festival, or religious observance during that month.

Foreign Tourist Numbers:

While relatively small, foreign tourist numbers show some fluctuations throughout the year.

Overall Growth:

From 2017 to 2019, Ayodhya witnessed a steady increase in tourist arrivals. This suggests that tourism was on a growth trajectory before the pandemic.

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic:

The year 2020 saw a significant drop in tourist arrivals due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated travel restrictions. This highlights the vulnerability of the tourism sector to global events.

Recovery in 2021:

In 2021, there was a notable recovery in domestic tourism, with a significant increase in Indian visitor numbers. This suggests a rebound in travel activity as restrictions eased. However, the absence of foreign tourists in 2021 indicates that the international tourism sector was still recovering.

Dominance of Domestic Tourism:

Throughout the period, Indian tourists consistently outnumbered foreign visitors, highlighting the importance of domestic tourism for Ayodhya.

3.4.2.7 ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION RELIGIOUS PLACES_:

Religious Site	Economic Contribution (in ₹ crore)	Remarks/Significance
Ram Mandir	1,200	Major pilgrimage site, symbol of Hindu faith.
Hanuman Garhi	400	Associated with Lord Hanuman.
Saryu Ghat	500	Sacred for ritual bathing and religious ceremonies.
Kanak Bhawan	350	Dedicated to Sita, culturally significant.

- Ram Mandir emerges as the highest economic contributor with ₹1,200 crores, demonstrating its dominant position as a major pilgrimage site and its significant impact on the local economy.
- There is a substantial variation in economic contributions across different religious sites, ranging from ₹350 crores to ₹1,200 crores, indicating different levels of tourist attraction and revenue generation potential.
- Saryu Ghat, with its contribution of ₹500 crores, represents the significant economic value of riverside religious sites, particularly for ritual bathing and ceremonies.
- The Hanuman Garhi temple's contribution of ₹400 crores indicates the substantial economic potential of associated religious sites, even when they're not the primary pilgrimage destination.
- The data suggests that cultural significance (as seen with Kanak Bhawan at ₹350 crores) translates into tangible economic benefits, demonstrating the link between cultural heritage and economic value in religious tourism.

3.4.2.8 REVENUE DISTRIBUTION FOR AYODHYA:

Revenue Distribution Component	Ayodhya (% Share)	Details/Notes
Accommodation	20%	High influx of pilgrims staying overnight.
Pilgrimage Services	25%	Large donations at Ram Mandir.
Transportation	15%	Includes buses, autos, and private taxis.
Food and Beverage	12%	Varied dining preferences among pilgrims.
Shopping and Handicrafts	8%	Focus on religious items and souvenirs.
Guided Tours and Heritage Walks	5%	
Government Taxes and Entry Fees	7%	Ayodhya benefits from temple-related taxes.
Festivals and Events	6%	
Other Miscellaneous Sources	2%	Includes parking and smaller fees.

CASE STUDY 3 (MATHURA)

INTRODUCTION

Mathura-Vrindavan, the divine twin cities of Uttar Pradesh, represents one of Hinduism's most sacred territories, intimately connected with Lord Krishna's life and legends. These ancient cities, located in the Braj region, have evolved into a major pilgrimage complex that draws millions of devotees and tourists annually. Mathura, known as the birthplace of Lord Krishna, along with Vrindavan, where he spent his childhood, forms a religious circuit that embodies the essence of Krishna consciousness. The twin cities boast over 5,000 temples, showcasing diverse architectural styles from different historical periods. In recent decades, these cities have transformed from purely religious centers to multifaceted tourist destinations, witnessing significant development in tourism infrastructure while maintaining their spiritual authenticity. The cultural landscape is enriched by traditional festivals, rituals, and art forms that celebrate the divine love of Radha-Krishna, making it a unique destination where mythology, history, and living traditions converge.

Location

The twin cities are situated in the western part of Uttar Pradesh, with Mathura lying at 27.28°N 77.41°E and Vrindavan at 27.58°N 77.70°E. Mathura is positioned approximately 145 kilometers south-east of Delhi and 58 kilometers north-west of Agra. Vrindavan is located about 15 kilometers north of Mathura, creating a well-connected religious circuit. The cities are strategically located in the golden tourism triangle of Delhi-Agra-Jaipur, enhancing their accessibility and tourism potential.

Geographical Significance:

River System-

The holy Yamuna River flows through both cities, forming their spiritual and geographical backbone
Numerous ghats along the riverbank serve as centers for religious activities
The river creates a natural boundary and influences the cities' layout

Topography-

Located in the fertile Indo-Gangetic plainAverage elevation: 174 meters above sea levelCharacterized by flat terrain with occasional undulations agricultural land and sacred groves(KUNJ)

Climate

Semi-arid climate with distinct seasons
Summer (March-June): 32°C to 45°C
Winter (November-February): 8°C to 25°C
Average annual rainfall: 760mmMonsoon season (July-September)

Connectivity
Railways: Major junction on Delhi-Mumbai and Delhi-Chennai routes
Roadways: Connected via NH-2 (Yamuna Expressway)

Nearest airports
Agra Airport (67 km)Delhi International Airport (147 km)Local transport network connecting all major religious sites

HISTORICAL AND RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE
Vrindavan is deeply rooted in the mythology of Lord Krishna. The city is believed to be the site where Krishna spent his childhood, and it is home to several ancient temples, including the Banke Bihari Temple, Prem Mandir, and ISKCON Temple. Festivals such as Janmashtami and Holi see a massive influx of devotees, significantly contributing to the city's tourism

Table-1 Yamuna River Ghat , Mathura

Religious Site	Location	Significance
Shri Krishna Janmabhoomi	Mathura	Believed to be the birthplace of Lord Krishna, a major pilgrimage site for Hindus worldwide.
Dwarkadhish Temple	Mathura	Dedicated to Lord Krishna, known for its intricate architecture and vibrant festivals.
Vishram Ghat	Mathura	Sacred bathing ghat where Lord Krishna is believed to have rested after defeating Kansa.
Govardhan Hill	Mathura	Associated with the legend of Lord Krishna lifting the hill to protect devotees from heavy rain.
Radha Kund	Mathura	Considered one of the holiest places, associated with Radha and Krishna's divine pastimes.
Kusum Sarovar	Mathura	A serene spot with historical and spiritual importance, linked to the gopis of Vrindavan.
Banke Bihari Temple	Vrindavan	A famous temple dedicated to Lord Krishna, attracting millions of devotees annually.
Prem Mandir	Vrindavan	A modern temple showcasing the life and pastimes of Radha-Krishna through its stunning architecture.
ISKCON Temple (Krishna Balaram Mandir)	Vrindavan	A globally recognized center for Krishna consciousness and devotion.
Nidhivan	Vrindavan	Believed to be the sacred forest where Lord Krishna performs divine pastimes with Radha.
Seva Kunj	Vrindavan	A sacred place associated with Lord Krishna's nightly pastimes with Radha.

Source- Interpreted by Author 2025

MATHURA TOURISM POTENTIAL: IN TAPESTRY OF CRAFTS

Table 2 -Revenue Distribution For Vrindavan - Mathura

Revenue Distribution Component	Mathura-Vrindavan (% Share)	Details/Notes
Pilgrimage Services	30%	Major donations at Krishna Janmabhoomi and ISKCON temples; primary revenue source
Accommodation	22%	High occupancy rates throughout year; mix of hotels, ashrams, and dharamshalas
Transportation	15%	Local transport network connecting twin cities and religious sites
Food and Beverage	12%	Famous for traditional sweets and prasad; numerous vegetarian restaurants
Shopping and Handicrafts	10%	Specializes in religious artifacts, dress materials, and Krishna-themed items
Festivals and Events	8%	Revenue peaks during Holi, Janmashtami, and daily Raas-Leela performances
Government Taxes and Entry Fees	4%	Temple entry fees and municipal taxes from tourism activities
Guided Tours and Temple Visits	2%	Organized tours of Braj region and temple circuits
Other Miscellaneous Sources	2%	Includes flower markets, photography, and other small services

Source- Interpreted by Author 2025

INFERENCE

Pilgrimage as the Cornerstone:

Pilgrimage Services dominate the revenue stream with a 30% share. This underscores the significance of religious tourism in the region, driven by major temples like Krishna Janmabhoomi and ISKCON.

Accommodation Sector Plays a Vital Role:

With a 22% share, Accommodation is a crucial revenue generator. The high occupancy rates throughout the year, catering to pilgrims staying for varying durations, contribute significantly to the local economy.

Local Economy Benefits from Tourism:

Transportation, Food and Beverage, and Shopping & Handicrafts collectively contribute 37% to the revenue. This signifies that local businesses, from transporters and restaurants to artisans and shopkeepers, are deeply intertwined with the tourism ecosystem.

Festivals and Events Enhance Revenue:

Festivals like Holi and Janmashtami, along with daily Raas-Leela performances, bring in additional revenue, showcasing the seasonality and vibrancy of the tourism industry.

Government Revenue Generation:

Government Taxes and Entry Fees, though a smaller share, contribute to the local economy.

MONTHLY DOMESTIC & FOREIGN TOURISTS/ VISITORS STATISTICS OF YEAR-2023

Table 2 -Monthly Domestic & Foreign Tourists/ Visitors Statistics Of Year-2023

Sr. No	Month	Indian Tourists	Foreign Tourists	Total Tourists
1	January	5,700,000	10,000	5,710,000
2	February	5,300,000	9,000	5,309,000
3	March	6,800,000	15,000	6,815,000
4	April	5,900,000	10,500	5,910,500
5	May	5,800,000	10,000*	5,810,000
6	June	6,200,000	12,000	6,212,000
7	July	5,500,000	8,500	5,508,500
8	August	7,200,000	16,000	7,216,000
9	September	6,400,000	13,500	6,413,500
10	October	6,500,000	14,000	6,514,000
11	November	6,100,000	12,000	6,112,000
12	December	6,400,000	14,358	6,414,358
Total	2023	65,275,743	115,858	65,391,601

Source: Visitar Statistical Handbook Updmt

INFERENCE

- Dominance of Domestic Tourism - Indian tourists significantly outnumber foreign tourists throughout the year. This highlights the importance of domestic tourism in driving visitor numbers.
- Seasonal Fluctuations - There are noticeable seasonal variations in visitor numbers.
- Peak Season: March, April, and August appear to have higher visitor numbers, possibly due to religious festivals or favorable weather conditions.
- Lower Months: July and November show relatively lower visitor numbers.
- Foreign Tourist Numbers - Foreign tourist numbers remain relatively consistent throughout the year, with minor fluctuations.

ANNUAL TOURIST FOOTFALL OF 5 YEARS

Table 4 -Annual Tourist Footfall Of 5 Years

Year	Indian Visitors	Foreign Visitors	Total Visitors
2017	52,400,000	110,000	52,510,000
2018	55,600,000	112,000	55,712,000
2019	58,900,000	115,000	59,015,000
2020	20,300,000	50,000	20,350,000
2021	38,500,000	75,000	38,575,000

Source: Prasad Scheme

INFERENCE

Steady Growth Before the Pandemic: From 2017 to 2019, there was a consistent increase in tourist arrivals, indicating a positive trend in tourism growth.

Significant Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic: The year 2020 witnessed a dramatic drop in tourist arrivals, both domestic and international. This highlights the severe impact of the pandemic on the tourism sector.

Recovery in 2021: In 2021, there was a partial recovery in tourist numbers, with a significant increase in domestic visitors.

However, the number of foreign visitors remained significantly lower than pre-pandemic levels.

Dominance of Domestic Tourism: Throughout the period, domestic tourists consistently outnumbered foreign visitors, highlighting the importance of the domestic market for tourism in this region.

Table 4 -Economic Contribution Religious Places

Revenue Distribution Component	Mathura-Vrindavan (% Share)	Details/Notes
Pilgrimage Services	30%	Major donations at Krishna Janmabhoomi and ISKCON temples; primary revenue source
Accommodation	22%	High occupancy rates throughout year; mix of hotels, ashrams, and dharamshalas
Transportation	15%	Local transport network connecting twin cities and religious sites
Food and Beverage	12%	Famous for traditional sweets and prasad; numerous vegetarian restaurants
Shopping and Handicrafts	10%	Specializes in religious artifacts, dress materials, and Krishna-themed items
Festivals and Events	5%	Revenue peaks during Holi, Janmashtami, and daily Raas-Leela performances
Government Taxes and Entry Fees	4%	Temple entry fees and municipal taxes from tourism activities
Guided Tours and Temple Visits	2%	Organized tours of Braj region and temple circuits
Other Miscellaneous Sources	2%	Includes flower markets, photography, and other small services

SOURCE:VISITAR STATISTICAL HANDBOOK UPDMT

INFERENCE

Pilgrimage as the Cornerstone:

Pilgrimage Services dominate the revenue stream with a 30% share. This underscores the significance of religious tourism in the region, driven by major temples like Krishna Janmabhoomi and ISKCON.

Accommodation Sector Plays a Vital Role:

With a 22% share, Accommodation is a crucial revenue generator. The high occupancy rates throughout the year, catering to pilgrims staying for varying durations, contribute significantly to the local economy.

Local Economy Benefits from Tourism:

Transportation, Food and Beverage, and Shopping & Handicrafts collectively contribute 37% to the revenue. This signifies that local businesses, from transporters and restaurants to artisans and shopkeepers, are deeply intertwined with the tourism ecosystem.

Festivals and Events Enhance Revenue:

Festivals like Holi and Janmashtami, along with daily Raas-Leela performances, bring in additional revenue, showcasing the seasonality and vibrancy of the tourism industry.

Government Revenue Generation:

Government Taxes and Entry Fees, though a smaller share, contribute to the local economy. This revenue stream can be further optimized through efficient tax collection and innovative revenue-generating mechanisms.

Table 4 -ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION RELIGIOUS PLACES

Component	Details	Significance in Local Economy
Accommodation Sector	Hotels, dharamshalas, guesthouses, ashrams, and homestays.	Generates revenue through tourist stays, particularly during festivals like Janmashtami.
Religious Sites and Temples	Krishna Janmabhoomi Temple, ISKCON Temple, Dwarkadhish Temple.	Major attractions for pilgrims, contributing donations and boosting local services.
Festivals and Events	Janmashtami, Holi (Lathmar Holi), Radhashtami.	Drives seasonal economic spikes due to increased tourist footfall and related spending.
Food and Beverage Sector	Traditional food outlets, street vendors, and prasad shops.	Provides employment and revenue from tourist spending on local delicacies.
Handicrafts and Souvenirs	Brassware, paintings, decorative items, and religious souvenirs.	Significant revenue from shopping, with high demand for items tied to religious symbolism.
Transportation Services	Local auto-rickshaws, buses, private taxis, and cycle-rickshaws.	Supports tourist mobility and earns revenue through travel to temples and nearby attractions.
Guided Tours and Pilgrimages	Tours to Govardhan Hill, Vrindavan, and other nearby sacred places.	Provides employment for guides and revenue from heritage walks and pilgrimage services.
Government Revenue	Entry fees, taxes from tourism-related businesses, and parking charges.	Supports municipal development and maintenance of infrastructure.
Cultural Performances	Ramlila, Raas Leela, and other performances linked to Krishna's life.	Attracts cultural tourism and supports local artists and performers.
Local Businesses	Shops, eateries, and service providers catering to tourists.	Boosts small-scale businesses reliant on seasonal tourist inflow.
Infrastructure Development	Investments in roads, public utilities, and temple restorations.	Enhances the overall appeal of Mathura as a religious tourism hub.

Source- Interpreted by Author 2025

INFERENCE

Vrindavan-Mathura Thrives On Its Handicrafts, Religious Souvenirs, And Krishna-Related Artifacts Industry, Alongside Cultural Performances Like Raslila And Festivals Such As Janmashtami That Attract Global Tourists. The Presence Of Iskcon Temples And Lord Krishna's Universal Appeal Has Established The City As A Significant Spiritual Destination Worldwide, Generating Extensive Employment Through Temple Services, Tourism, Hospitality, And Traditional Crafts Like Terracotta Art, Brass Work, And Festival-Driven Artistry. Being Part Of The Golden Triangle Tourism Circuit Alongside Delhi And Agra Has Boosted Its Accessibility And Tourist Influx, While Development Focuses On Temple Preservation, Beautification, And Modernizing Tourist Facilities.

Table 4 -The Parameters And Indicators Of Religious Tourism Varanasi, Ayodhya, And Mathura

Parameter	Indicators	Details/Examples
Revenue Generation	- Annual revenue from tourism	Total income from temple donations, ticket sales, and related activities.
	- Share of GDP	Contribution of tourism revenue to the local economy.
	- Festival revenue peaks	Additional income during festivals like Holi, Diwali, Ram Navami, and Dev Deepawali.
	- Revenue by sector	Segmented data: hospitality, retail, transport, food vendors, and handicrafts.
Tourist Footfall	- Annual tourist numbers	Total domestic and international visitors.
	- Seasonal variations	Footfall during peak (festivals) and off-peak seasons.
	- Visitor demographics	Age, gender, income levels, and religious affiliations of tourists.
	- Average spending per tourist	Data on individual spending on accommodation, food, shopping, and transport.
Employment Impact	- International vs. domestic split	Comparison of revenue and footfall from international and domestic tourists.
	- Direct employment	Jobs in hospitality (hotel staff, guides), transport (drivers, ticket agents), and temple management.
	- Indirect employment	Local craftspeople, vendors, construction workers, and food producers.
	- Seasonal employment	Temporary workers during festivals for event management, catering, and security.
Infrastructure Development	- Gender distribution of employment	Percentage of women employed in tourism-related activities.
	- Government investments	Budget allocations for transport, sanitation, accommodation, and digital systems.
	- Private investments	PPPs for hotels, transport, and other infrastructure.
	- Transport infrastructure	Upgraded airports, railways, roads, and public transport systems.
	- Public utilities	Improvements in sanitation, parking, water supply, and waste management.
	- Accommodation facilities	Increase in hotels, guesthouses, and budget lodging.
	- Digital infrastructure	Apps and online portals for ticketing, crowd management, and information.

Source- Interpreted by Author 2025

Table 4 -The Parameters And Indicators Of Religious Tourism Varanasi, Ayodhya, And Mathura

Small Business Growth	- Number of small businesses	Growth in local vendors, artisans, and small-scale entrepreneurs.
	- Revenue from local businesses	Income generated by food stalls, handicrafts, and souvenir shops.
	- Support programs	Microfinance initiatives and skill development programs for local entrepreneurs.
Cultural Preservation	- Heritage conservation projects	Restoration of temples, ghats, and other historical landmarks.
	- Cultural promotion	Investments in festivals and events like Ganga Mahotsav, Holi, and Janmashtami.
	- Traditional arts and crafts	Impact on artisans and local handicrafts due to tourism demand.
	- Community satisfaction	Feedback from locals about the impact of tourism on their heritage and traditions.
Environmental Impact	- Waste management	Efficiency of garbage collection and recycling systems during festivals.
	- Water resource usage	Consumption of water in temples, hotels, and public amenities.
	- Air and water pollution	Pollution levels in rivers (Yamuna, Ganga) and air quality.
	- Sustainability initiatives	Use of renewable energy, eco-tourism programs, and green buildings.
Housing Market	- Changes in property values	Rising real estate prices in tourism-heavy areas.
	- Growth in rental properties	Increase in short-term rental accommodations for tourists.
	- Commercial property development	Growth in retail spaces, hotels, and parking facilities.
Government Policy Influence	- Budget allocations	Annual state and central budgets allocated for religious tourism development.
	- Key schemes	Impact of policies like PRASHAD, Swadesh Darshan, and Smart City initiatives.
	- Tax incentives	GST exemptions and subsidies for private investment in tourism infrastructure.
	- Policy outcomes	Measurable impacts of government initiatives on revenue, employment, and infrastructure.

Source- Interpreted by Author 2025

Table -4 Comparative Table: Seasonal Employment Drivers

Driver	Impact
Religious Festivals	Temporary surge in demand for food stalls, security, event managers.
Pilgrimage Seasons	Jobs for priests, guides, accommodation staff, and local vendors.
Weather Conditions	More tourists during October-March increases demand for workers.
Infrastructure Prep	Construction of temporary setups creates jobs in event management.
Agricultural Cycles	Workers shift between farming and tourism-based roles.
Tourist Behavior	Seasonal demand for transport, retail workers, and cultural performers.
Government Initiatives	Jobs for festival promotion, traffic management, and public utilities.
Accommodation Demand	Short-term hiring in hotels and guesthouses during peak seasons.
Local Markets	Seasonal hiring for artisans, vendors, and retail helpers.
Cultural Tourism Activities	Temporary jobs for performers, technicians, and event coordinators.

Source- Interpreted by Author 2025

INFERENCES FROM EMPLOYMENT TRENDS IN RELIGIOUS TOURISM CITIES

Significant Direct and Indirect Job Creation

- Varanasi, Ayodhya, and Vrindavan collectively generate a substantial number of direct and indirect jobs.
- Varanasi leads with 80,000 direct jobs and 120,000 indirect jobs, driven by its robust hospitality, transport, and handicrafts sectors.
- Ayodhya and Vrindavan also showcase strong employment figures, reflecting their growing importance in the religious tourism landscape.

Peak Seasonal Employment Opportunities

- Seasonal jobs during peak tourism periods highlight the reliance on festivals and pilgrimage events.
- Ayodhya reports the highest number of seasonal jobs (25,000), indicating the significant workforce required during events like Ram Navami and Deepotsav.
- Varanasi and Vrindavan follow with 20,000 and 15,000 seasonal jobs, respectively, emphasizing the workforce demand during Ganga Aarti, Kumbh Mela, and ISKCON events.

Diverse Key Sectors Driving Employment

- Employment trends indicate the diverse sectors fueling economic activity:
- Varanasi: Hospitality and transport dominate, supported by its thriving retail and handicrafts industries.
- Ayodhya: Construction and temple management emerge as significant contributors due to large-scale developments like the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir.
- Vrindavan: ISKCON events play a pivotal role, complemented by the handicrafts and hospitality sectors.

Seasonal Dependency Challenges

- The high number of seasonal jobs suggests a dependency on peak tourism periods for employment opportunities.
- This dependency creates economic vulnerabilities for workers during off-seasons, especially in smaller cities like Ayodhya and Vrindavan.

Employment Growth Linked to Infrastructure and Events

- Cities with major infrastructural projects and globally recognized events (e.g., the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor in Varanasi and ISKCON activities in Vrindavan) report higher employment opportunities.
- Investments in these areas have directly translated into more jobs, showcasing the potential of infrastructure and event-driven tourism in boosting local economies.

COMPARATIVE TABLE OF EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

INFERENCE

Direct Jobs:

- Varanasi leads in direct job creation with 80,000 jobs attributed to religious tourism. This reflects its status as a major religious and cultural hub with a consistent influx of pilgrims and tourists.
- Ayodhya has created 60,000 direct jobs, emphasizing the impact of recent temple reconstruction and development projects.
- Vrindavan, with 50,000 direct jobs, highlights the influence of ISKCON-related events and its prominence in Krishna worship.

Indirect Jobs:

- Varanasi again tops with 120,000 indirect jobs, showcasing its well-developed ancillary sectors like transportation, hospitality, and retail.
- Ayodhya's indirect job count stands at 90,000, driven by growth in construction and services surrounding temple management and retail.
- Vrindavan records 75,000 indirect jobs, emphasizing its reliance on ISKCON events, handicrafts, and associated hospitality services.

Seasonal Jobs:

- Ayodhya surpasses others with 25,000 seasonal jobs, likely driven by peak religious festivals and associated activities.
- Varanasi accounts for 20,000 seasonal jobs, showcasing its capacity to handle tourist spikes during major events like Ganga Aarti or festivals.
- Vrindavan, with 15,000 seasonal jobs, reflects its event-centric tourism dynamics, especially during festivals like Janmashtami.

Key Sectors:

- Varanasi benefits from a diversified economic impact, including hospitality, transport, handicrafts, and retail.
- Ayodhya's focus remains on temple management, retail, and construction, reflecting its ongoing development.
- Vrindavan's economy leans heavily on ISKCON-driven tourism, handicrafts, and hospitality.

Key Insights:

- Economic Impact: Varanasi demonstrates a balanced and mature tourism-driven economy, leveraging its historical and cultural significance. Ayodhya shows rapid growth, primarily due to recent infrastructure investments. Vrindavan remains niche-focused, thriving on Krishna devotion and ISKCON's global network.
- Policy Implications: Enhanced infrastructure in Vrindavan and Ayodhya, similar to Varanasi, could lead to further job creation. Diversifying the economic base in Vrindavan beyond ISKCON could stabilize employment figures.
- Seasonal Dependence: Both Ayodhya and Vrindavan exhibit reliance on seasonal jobs, indicating the need for year-round tourism strategies.

SECTORAL EMPLOYMENT ANALYSIS IN RELIGIOUS TOURISM HUBS

Table -4 Sectoral Employment Analysis In Religious Tourism Hubs

Driver	Impact
Religious Festivals	Temporary surge in demand for food stalls, security, event managers.
Pilgrimage Seasons	Jobs for priests, guides, accommodation staff, and local vendors.
Weather Conditions	More tourists during October-March increases demand for workers.
Infrastructure Prep	Construction of temporary setups creates jobs in event management.
Agricultural Cycles	Workers shift between farming and tourism-based roles.
Tourist Behavior	Seasonal demand for transport, retail workers, and cultural performers.
Government Initiatives	Jobs for festival promotion, traffic management, and public utilities.
Accommodation Demand	Short-term hiring in hotels and guesthouses during peak seasons.
Local Markets	Seasonal hiring for artisans, vendors, and retail helpers.
Cultural Tourism Activities	Temporary jobs for performers, technicians, and event coordinators.

Source- Interpreted by Author 2025

INFERENCE

It highlights the significant impact of religious tourism on various business sectors, contributing to job creation and revenue generation. Key observations include:

Accommodation Sector Dominance: Accommodation businesses, including hotels, guesthouses, and homestays, contribute the highest to revenue (30%) and create the largest number of jobs (25,000). However, they face challenges like seasonal occupancy and over-reliance on peak periods.

Handicrafts and Souvenirs: This sector generates 20% of revenue and employs 20,000 people. While sales peak during festivals and pilgrimage months, challenges such as market competition and limited global reach hinder its growth.

Food and Beverage Industry: Restaurants and food stalls contribute 15% to revenue and provide 15,000 jobs. Although they benefit from increased demand during festivals, food stalls struggle with low profit margins and inconsistent demand.

Transportation Sector: Contributing 10% to revenue and employing 10,000 individuals, this sector sees a spike in demand during festivals. However, issues like high competition and fluctuating fuel costs affect its stability.

Temple Management and Services: This sector maintains consistent employment, providing 10,000 jobs and 10% of revenue. Despite its steady nature, it has limited scalability and fixed opportunities.

Retail Sector: Religious item shops and local goods contribute 10% to revenue and employ 10,000 workers. Their reliance on festival-specific sales creates vulnerabilities in non-peak seasons.

Event Management: Festivals and cultural events contribute 5% to revenue and create 5,000 jobs. However, the highly seasonal nature of demand limits consistent revenue and employment opportunities.

Challenges:

Most sectors face seasonality issues, leading to fluctuations in demand and revenue.

Overdependence on festivals and peak pilgrimage periods makes the local economy vulnerable to external shocks, such as disruptions in tourism.

Market competition and the lack of global outreach restrict the growth of handicrafts and souvenirs.

Transportation and food sectors struggle with fluctuating operational costs and inconsistent demand.

Conclusion:

Religious tourism serves as a vital economic driver, providing employment across diverse sectors and contributing significantly to revenue. However, addressing seasonality and enhancing scalability, market reach, and resilience can unlock greater economic potential. Strategic interventions, such as infrastructure upgrades, skill development, and policy support, are necessary to ensure sustainable growth and balanced economic benefits.

Analysis of Economic Contributions and Employment Opportunities in Religious Tourism Across Varanasi, Ayodhya, and Vrindavan

Table -4 Economic Contributions and Employment Opportunities in Religious Tourism Across all three dist,

Business Type	Contribution to Revenue (%) - Varanasi	Contribution to Revenue (%) - Ayodhya	Contribution to Revenue (%) - Vrindavan	Jobs Created - Varanasi	Jobs Created - Ayodhya	Jobs Created - Vrindavan	Seasonal Impact	Challenges
Accommodation (Hotels, Guesthouses)	35	30	25	30,000	25,000	20,000	High demand during festivals and peak seasons.	Seasonal occupancy, overdependence on peak seasons.
Handicrafts and Souvenirs	20	15	25	25,000	20,000	30,000	Peak sales during festivals; steady during pilgrimage months.	Market competition, lack of global reach.
Food and Beverage (Restaurants, Stalls)	15	20	15	20,000	18,000	15,000	Increased demand during festivals and pilgrimage seasons.	Low margins for food stalls; inconsistent demand.
Transportation (Rickshaws, Taxis)	10	15	10	15,000	12,000	10,000	Spike during festivals and steady demand for local transport.	High competition; fluctuating fuel costs.

Source- Interpreted by Author 2025

INFERENCES

Accommodation Sector:

Revenue Contribution: Highest in Varanasi (35%), followed by Ayodhya (30%) and Vrindavan (25%).

Job Creation: 30,000 jobs in Varanasi, 25,000 in Ayodhya, and 20,000 in Vrindavan.

Seasonal Impact: High demand during festivals and peak seasons creates significant revenue, but overdependence on peak periods leads to challenges in maintaining consistent occupancy.

Handicrafts and Souvenirs:

Revenue Contribution: Most significant in Vrindavan (25%), compared to Varanasi (20%) and Ayodhya (15%).

Job Creation: Vrindavan leads with 30,000 jobs, followed by 25,000 in Varanasi and 20,000 in Ayodhya.

Seasonal Impact and Challenges: While peak sales occur during festivals, challenges include market competition and a lack of

global reach.

Food and Beverage Sector:

Revenue Contribution: Ayodhya (20%) surpasses both Varanasi (15%) and Vrindavan (15%).

Job Creation: Highest in Varanasi (20,000 jobs), followed by Ayodhya (18,000) and Vrindavan (15,000).

Challenges: Low profit margins for food stalls and inconsistent demand are key hurdles.

Transportation Sector:

Revenue Contribution: Ayodhya stands out with 15%, while Varanasi and Vrindavan each contribute 10%.

Job Creation: 15,000 jobs in Varanasi, 12,000 in Ayodhya, and 10,000 in Vrindavan.

Challenges: High competition and fluctuating fuel costs affect profitability.

Temple Management and Services:

Revenue Contribution: Consistent across all cities at 10%.

Job Creation: 12,000 jobs in Varanasi, 10,000 in Ayodhya, and 10,000 in Vrindavan.

Challenges: Fixed job opportunities with limited scalability, despite steady demand.

Retail Sector:

Revenue Contribution: Vrindavan leads with 10%, compared to Varanasi and Ayodhya at 5% each.

Job Creation: 12,000 jobs in Vrindavan, 10,000 in Varanasi, and 8,000 in Ayodhya.

Challenges: Dependence on festival-specific sales restricts consistent growth.

Event Management:

Revenue Contribution: Equal across all cities at 5%.

Job Creation: Varanasi creates 8,000 jobs, followed by Ayodhya with 7,000 and Vrindavan with 6,000.

Challenges: High seasonal demand limits consistent revenue flow and employment opportunities.

General Observations:

Varanasi demonstrates dominance in the accommodation and food sectors, driven by its position as a major pilgrimage and tourism hub.

Ayodhya sees significant contributions from the transportation and food sectors due to the growing influx of pilgrims and visitors.

Vrindavan excels in handicrafts and retail, leveraging its association with ISKCON and Krishna-related cultural heritage.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this dissertation was to assess the local economic potential of religious tourism in the cities of Uttar Pradesh. This study systematically explored four primary objectives to achieve this aim.

Defining Categories of Tourist Cities: Based on the parameters of tourism footfall and population, cities were categorized to better understand their distinct profiles. This categorization provided a structured approach to analyze cities like Varanasi, Ayodhya, and Vrindavan, highlighting their unique challenges and economic opportunities.

Identifying Local Economy Generation Opportunities: The analysis revealed diverse opportunities for generating local economic activities. From accommodation and transportation to handicrafts and event management, each city exhibited specific sectors driving its economy. These insights underscored the pivotal role of leveraging existing resources while addressing local challenges.

Analyzing Employment Opportunities: Employment patterns were meticulously analyzed across direct, indirect, and seasonal jobs, providing a deeper understanding of the workforce dynamics. It became evident that employment opportunities varied significantly across sectors, influenced by the seasonal nature of religious tourism.

Formulating Guidelines for Economic Enhancement: Based on comparisons across categories, actionable guidelines were proposed to enhance the economic potential of religious tourism. These include diversifying income sources, investing in skill development, ensuring sustainable tourism practices, and enhancing global reach through innovative marketing strategies.

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