

# AN ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS TOURISM IN UTTAR PRADESH

Nishi Tripathi

Research Scholar,

Department of Economics and Rural Development  
Dr Rammanohar Lohia Avadh University, Ayodhya

---

## ABSTRACT

Millions of pilgrims visit Uttar Pradesh every year for religious pilgrimages, which boosts the state's economy and cultural profile. Varanasi, Ayodhya, Mathura-Vrindavan, and other prominent religious tourist locations are the subject of this study that analyses the effects of religious tourism on the state.

Typically, people go on vacation, do business, or visit other non-migration-related destinations for a period of shorter than a year. This is known as tourism. With holy rivers like the Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati, as well as many revered religious sites like Varanasi, Vrindavan, Mathura, Sarnath, Chitrakoot, Ayodhya, Hastinapur, Prayagraj, Vindhyachal, and more, the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh stands out in discussions about religious tourism. Varanasi, on the banks of the Ganges, is one of the most famous Hindu pilgrimage destinations in Uttar Pradesh, but the state is home to many more. The mythological rivers Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati meet in Prayagraj, Mathura is famous as the birthplace of Lord Krishna and Ayodhya is famous as the birthplace of Lord Rama. Not only does Hinduism find Uttar Pradesh appealing, but Buddhists also find it significant. Among the most famous Buddhist pilgrimage sites in the world are Sarnath, Kushinagar, and Saraswati, the places where Lord Buddha spoke his first sermon. Among the many Islamic holy sites in Uttar Pradesh, the Fatehpur Sikri shrine of Sufi saint Hazrat Salim Chisti and the Lucknow mosque Dewa Sharif are well-known. This article examines the current regulations and frameworks in Uttar Pradesh that pertain to religious tourism, specifically focusing on the state's holy sites. By providing religious services, transportation, lodging, and more, the religious tourism business brings in a lot of money for the state. Inadequate knowledge, inadequate policies, limited management, inadequate infrastructure, lack of regulations, and a lack of cultural and environmental sustainability at these religious tourism destinations are some of the challenges that the industry faces.

**KEYWORDS:** Pilgrimages, Religious, cultural ,environmental sustainability, tourism

---

## I. INTRODUCTION

This is what the World Tourism Organization calls "the act of individuals journeying to and residing in locations different from their habitual environment for a duration not exceeding one consecutive year." Tourism is defined as "the movement of people from one place to another for the purpose of recreation, sightseeing, or other forms of pleasure, typically in conjunction with the purchase of goods or services from service providers," by Britannica.com. Even before the term "tourism" was first used in the 18th century, there was a time when people would go on vacation. Even in ancient times, there were organized systems for tourism, according to historical reports. These systems included exploration and a focus on fundamental goals. A watershed event occurred in the 18th century when international tourism emerged, becoming the most important economic activity in the world. One kind of tourism involves traveling within one's own country, while the other kind involves traveling to other countries. The prosperity of every nation is greatly affected by tourism. Over the past few decades, the tourist industry has seen steady growth and a great deal of variety. Because of this change, it is now one of the main forces propelling the world economy forward. Its importance as an economic driver is well-known around the globe, and some even go so far as to say it may lead the service industry. Lawarance (1992) argues that places have always had a distinct emotional resonance for humans, and that this is especially true for visitors who seek out sites with history, culture, or religious value. A lot of people have found jobs thanks to the tourist sector, and a lot of people's lives have changed as a result. The tourist industry contributes significantly to the GDP of several nations. The significance of tourism is shown when one considers the funds contributed by visitors, who spend money on products and services, and the taxes paid by businesses that cater to tourists. Due to its deep relevance, religious tourism merits an in-depth consideration as it is a remarkable feature of tourism with multiple ramifications. As to Scott (2012), holy places have been around for all of recorded history, and people of all faiths have used them as starting points for pilgrimages. Osterrieth (1997) investigated how certain nations have successfully marketed their holy sites as tourist attractions, and how believers see these locations as such. Many adherents of many religions across the world still make the journey

to historic and contemporary pilgrimage sites, as highlighted by Coleman and Elsner (1995). This is particularly the case in a nation like India, where prominent temples and tourist attractions cater to adherents of practically every major religion practiced today. A deeper understanding of the notion of a divine entity can be gained via religious tourism. As a species, we humans believe in an ultimate power that acts on its own will to control and direct the cosmos. Faithful people show their commitment to a higher power via various religious behaviors. The connection between this theistic belief and Einstein's theory of energy conservation—which states that energy cannot be produced or destroyed but can only be transformed—is complex and interwoven.

**Travel for Faith-Based Experiences** Because many writers have come to different conclusions, trying to pin down exactly what religious tourism is may be a daunting undertaking. Traveling to holy places for the sake of worship, pilgrimage, missionary work, or recreation is known as religious tourism, or faith tourism. A religious tourist is someone whose travel goals include seeing and learning about places of worship, their art, or the cultural and creative expressions that stem from them. It goes beyond just religious tourism to include wellness tourism, which is centered upon health and healing. The majority of religious tourists seek for locations with strong religious ties, well-known for their therapeutic and spiritual qualities, and rich cultural diversity. When seen in this light, India's rich cultural and religious history positions it as a spiritually significant tourist destination.

## **II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The significance of pilgrimage tourism has been the subject of much research, and the writers generally agree that sacred sites experience significant changes as a result of the constant flow of visitors. In their discussion of the changing link between religion and tourism, Timothy and Olsen (2006) highlight the centrality of spirituality. The many aspects of pilgrimage that are now closely linked to tourism have been recorded by Badone and Roseman (2004). The dynamics of pilgrimage tourism can be better understood by looking at the model put up by Shinde (2006). This model describes the dynamics between pilgrimage visitors and host communities, drawing attention to the effects on everyone concerned. This results in a situation that is beneficial for everyone involved. As pointed out by Lawrence (1992), the model outlines the direct environmental impacts of such excursions. Further, the social and economic components are also significantly impacted in an indirect manner by these connections. Travelers on pilgrimages have the most influence because they interact directly with the many different types of religious buildings they see while they are there. There are a number of things that draw pilgrimage visitors, while Evans (1976) contends that religious institutions are unquestionably the principal motive. Businesses dealing in religious paraphernalia, such as holy water, sculptures, and candles, may be included among them, along with lodging companies, travel agencies, restaurants, and souvenir stores. Businesses like this help keep the local economy afloat, which is just one more reason why religious pilgrimages are so significant. Furthermore, as shown in the examples of the French town of Lourdes and the Italian city of Assisi, religious places substantially add to the local economy (Fleischer & Felsenstein, 2000). According to Mihajlović and Vidak (2017), religious festivals, in particular, may greatly enhance a location's appeal as a tourism destination. At the same time, according to Secall (2003), pilgrimage has frequently included worldly aspects into spiritual travels throughout human history. Since religious tourism also leads to population expansion, infrastructure development, and job creation, it may have an economic impact similar to that of leisure tourism. Lourdes, a Catholic pilgrimage destination, is a prime example of how pilgrimage tourism can greatly influence the development of the local community. According to Eade (1992), the annual influx of pilgrims from 140 different nations, totaling over 6 million, causes the local population to steadily rise. The Polish town of Czestochowa, which has a population of 225,000 but receives more than 4.5 million pilgrims—almost 18 times its own population—due to its religious and spiritual importance—as illuminated by Biadacz and Biadacz (2015). The local infrastructure undergoes significant upgrades due to the spike in pilgrim numbers, as pointed out by Jackowski and Smith (1992). The extra issue that Morpeth (2007) mentions has a detrimental effect on pilgrimage travel to El Camino, Spain. This case marked an acceleration of secularization. By seeing Santiago as the birthplace of European culture in relation to El Camino de Santiago in Spain, Morpeth (2007) addresses an additional issue that has begun to adversely affect pilgrimage travel. This case marked an acceleration of secularization. In that it promoted Santiago as the first European cultural. The above literature study makes it clear that pilgrimage tourism and related activities have both positive and negative outcomes. All three of these factors—population, ecology, and economy—are touched by these impacts. Both concepts are sometimes employed interchangeably in research, and the idea of religious tourism also displays a similar dualism. In addition to secular visitors, Dowson notes that religious tourists sometimes go on pilgrimages to places of historical importance (2020).

## **III. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

**An Analysis of Uttar Pradesh Possibilities for Religious Tourism  
FEATURES OF RELIGIOUS TOURISM**

1. Marking Religious Occasions — The tenets of every faith are based on long-established traditions and ceremonies. Every religion's mythology details an event from its past, such as the return of Lord Rama to Ayodhya or the dates of birth of important personalities like Jesus Christ, Krishna, or Prophet Mohammad. Religious people go to holy sites to remember these occurrences.
2. Seeking Safety and Comfort - During difficult circumstances, going on a religious trip can be a means to find comfort and safety. Visiting holy places is a way to gain spiritual merit in all religions. As a Buddhist, going to a temple or shrine can help you reach nirvana. Older people frequently seek atonement for the sins they may have committed over their lives when they participate in religious tourism.
3. Showing Appreciation and Seeking Atonement - Life is full of obstacles, and when confronted with apparently insurmountable issues, people seek God's help. Sometimes individuals go to religious places to thank God for saving them from serious problems or to ask for forgiveness for their transgressions and make a promise to themselves that they will not do it again.
4. Deities Worship — The primary motivation for many people's visits to religious sites is to worship God. Pilgrimages to Mecca, Jerusalem, and the four Dhams are all part of the path to moksha, or enlightenment, for Muslims, Jews, and Hindus, respectively.
5. Hear the Preaching's of Religious Elders -When individuals travel for religious purposes, they typically go to conferences where revered religious figures give talks on the truths and teachings of their faith. These days, the vast majority of religious excursions bring people together for the sake of social and spiritual growth.

#### **Uttar pradesh's related tourism**

With its rich cultural diversity and abundance of holy sites, the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh is well-known as a pilgrimage destination. Religious tourism and the state's stunning natural scenery are two of Uttar Pradesh most well-known draws. There are important pilgrimage sites in Uttar Pradesh for all the world's main religions, and every year, thousands of people travel from all over the world to visit these sites. The state of Uttar Pradesh is home to several Hindu holy places, making it a popular tourist destination for Hindus.

#### **Destination for Religious Tourists in Uttar Pradesh**

**Varanasi:** Varanasi, a city in northern India, is famous for the many ghats (stone steps) along the Ganges River that devotees take in the water in the hopes of purifying themselves. A holy plunge in the Ganges is followed by a reverence for Lord Shiva by religious pilgrims. Panchganga Ghat, Dashashwamedh Ghat, Assi Ghat, and the Tulsi Ghat are among of Varanasi's most revered holy locations, where visitors may see the hypnotic Ganga aarti. The revered Banaras Hindu University, with its roots in India's liberation struggle, and the Kashi Vishwanath Temple, one of the twelve Jyotirlingas in India, are two more of Varanasi's most famous attractions.

**Prayagraj:** The city of Prayagraj is rich in historical importance. Originally called Prayag, the Mughal emperor Akbar changed the name to Allahabad in 1575 and then to Prayagraj again. In October 2018, Yogi Adityanath led government changed the name of Allahabad to Prayagraj. This city is famous for Kumbh Mela. The biggest assembly on Earth in Kumbh happens after every 12 years. The Kumbh Mela is held in four sacred cities: Prayagraj, Nashik, Ujjain, and Haridwar. According to historical records that date back to the time of the famous Chinese explorer Hsuan Tsang, who recorded Prayagraj as part of Harshavardhan's dominion, the city is a treasure trove of Hindu customs and culture. As the meeting point of the Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati rivers, the TriveniSangam is one of Prayagraj's most revered religious landmarks; pilgrims come from far and wide to atone for their transgressions at this sacred spot. In addition, Prayagraj is home to KhusroBagh, Prayagraj Fort, the Jodhabai Palace within the fort, and the Ashoka Pillar, which stands at a lofty 35 feet.

Mathura and Vrindavan are two of the holiest cities in Hindu mythology, where Krishna was born. The Hindu temple of Krishna Janmabhoomi is said to be located on the exact site where Lord Krishna was born in BrijBhoomi. The Braj region of Mathura-Vrindavan is commonly believed to have been where Lord Krishna resided during his formative years. Located on the Yamuna River, the holy city of Mathura is a popular destination for Hindu pilgrims thanks to its many ghats. Not to mention the delicious Mathura Peda sweet and the famous "Garbhagriha" jail cell.

**Ayodhya:** Ayodhya is a sacred site in Uttar Pradesh as the birth place of Lord Rama. It is also famous for newly constructed Ram Janmabhoomi temple at site believed to be Rama's birth place. In Hindu mythology, the ancient epic Ramayana centers on the heroic figure of Lord Rama, and Ayodhya is intricately linked to him. The gods may have built Ayodhya, but tradition has it that the first man in the cosmos, Manu, laid the groundwork for it. For Hindus, Ayodhya is one of the seven holiest places in India. As a celebration of Lord Rama's triumph over Ravana, the world-famous holiday of Diwali had its beginnings in Ayodhya. The birthplace of five Tirthankars gives Ayodhya religious significance in both Hinduism and Jainism. Notable religious sites in the city include the Hanuman Garhi temple, built by the Nawab of Awadh and reflecting GangaJamuni culture. The temples of Kanak Bhavan and Nageshwar Nath are also noteworthy in Ayodhya. Mani Parvat is said to be a portion of the hill where Hanuman discovered the Sanjeevani booti.

**Chitrakoot:** Chitrakoot gets its name from the scenic landscape that surrounds it, which is highly regarded for its natural beauty. The birthplace of Goswami Tulsidas, Rajapur, is located on the banks of the Yamuna River in this area, which is famous for both Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Hanuman Dhara, Kamadgiri hill, the River Mandakini, Bharat Koop, and the fact that it is claimed that Lord Rama spent around eleven years here are among the other attractions of Chitrakoot. The town is also associated with Hindu mythology. Because of its spiritual and environmental importance, Chitrakoot is well-known.

**Lucknow and Dewa Sharif:** Lucknow is the capital of Uttar Pradesh and is nicknamed the "City of Nawabs" due to its reputation as a site of distinguished Shia Islamic architecture and the academic achievements of universities such as Sanskriti University and Nadwa College of Islamic Studies. Among the city's many religious sites are the temples of Hanuman, Kalibari, Chandrika Devi, and Mankameshwar. Another well-known Lucknow holy site, Dewa Sharif is home to the mausoleum of Sufi saint Sayed Haji Waris Ali Shah.

**Sarnath:** Near the meeting point of the Ganga and Gomti rivers, in a very modest site, is Sarnath, one of the most famous holy places in India. "Isipatana," which means "the place where holy men landed," is one of the most prominent names that Sarnath has been known by throughout its history, according to the Pali canon. Many Buddhists believe that Gautam Buddha spoke his first speech and taught dharma in Sarnath, making it one of the four holiest sites in Buddhism. The founding of the Buddhist Sangha was also marked by Kandanna's enlightenment at Sarnath. Because he is the eleventh Tirthankar of Jainism, it is significant to the Jain community. Sarnath is home to several important landmarks, including as the 128-foot-tall Dhamek Stupa, the Ashoka Pillar, the ancient Chaukandi Stupa that Emperor Ashoka built, and the oldest museum in India, the Sarnath Archaeological Museum, which is run by the Archaeological Survey of India.

#### **Initiatives by the Uttar Pradesh Government to Encourage Religious Tourism**

Among Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's initiatives to encourage more pilgrims to visit Uttar Pradesh for religious purposes are:

- The tourist department's "one-stop-travel solution" webpage going live.
- At a tourist symposium, it was announced that pilgrimage sites will be connected to helicopter services.
- Strategies to link Agra, Prayagraj, Varanasi, and Lucknow for budget-friendly flight offerings.
- Suggesting a 500-tourist policy to enhance amenities and foster collaboration with visitors.
- The Tourism Department will launch an advertising campaign to promote religious and historical places to potential tourists.
- Prayagraj is promising first-rate amenities for pilgrims attending the Maha Kumbh in 2025.
- Making a public announcement on the development of a second airport at Kaushambi, Prayagraj (Prayagraj), to complement the already existing Noida airport Jewar.
- Creating a magnificent Ram monument on the banks of the Saryu River at Ayodhya to encourage pilgrims to visit for religious purposes.
- Bringing attention to Ayodhya as a sacred tourism site by lighting up notable structures and ghats.
- Letting the Chief Minister perform a river Saryuaarti and putting on a laser display along the riverbank.
- Coordinating a Ramlila show using Indonesian and Thai performers to encourage pilgrimage travel
- Making Ayodhya a popular tourist destination.
- Renovating ghats, installing CCTV cameras, building police stations, and guest homes to accommodate religious tourists are all part of the infrastructural initiatives in Ayodhya.
- Planning to launch helicopter services to enhance religious tourism to Mathura's Parikrama of Govardhan.
- To improve the Buddhist Tourist circuit, we need expand air connection from Gorakhpur airport to destinations like Kolkata, Kathmandu, Singapore, and Bangkok.

#### **The Positive Impact of Tourists on Uttar Pradesh**

- **Earnings in Foreign Exchange:** Tourism may be a great way to bring in some extra cash without having to worry about destroying our natural resources or sending our goods elsewhere. The chance to provide services to foreign visitors presents itself as a means to produce foreign cash.
- **Creating Jobs:** Gift shops, restaurants, hotels, and travel agencies are just a few of the many places where people with varying levels of education and experience may find work in the tourist business.
- **tourism is essential in protecting a nation's historical and artistic treasures.** Many people go to different nations so they may immerse themselves in its culture and history. As well as showcasing a country's rich history, historic monuments are important symbols of its history and culture; tourism plays an important role in protecting these sites from deterioration.

- Improvement and development of infrastructure: One of the major advantages of tourism is this very thing. This encompasses upgrades to infrastructure like highways and airports, as well as amenities like water supply, lodging choices, restaurants, and hotels.

International Relations: One of the most important functions of tourism is to promote understanding and friendship between nations. It helps nations establish social, cultural, and geographical ties with one another, which in turn fosters mutual understanding and collaboration on a global scale.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

This goal of this paper is to investigate "Prospects of Religious Tourism in Uttar Pradesh." According to the research, the presence of several holy sites in Uttar Pradesh—including Varanasi, Ayodhya, Prayagraj, Mathura, Chitrakoot, Sarnath, and Lucknow—makes the state an attractive destination for religious tourists. During religious events, fairs, and festivals, these places attract millions of pilgrims from all over the globe. Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognize the numerous obstacles that impede the development of religious tourism in Uttar Pradesh, even as it grows. Uttar Pradesh's government is struggling to promote religious tourism due to a number of issues, including poor management, underdeveloped infrastructure at religious sites, worries about climate change and its effects, food insecurity, political unrest, and the possibility of terrorist attacks. Religious tourism in Uttar Pradesh is hindered by these difficulties.

#### **REFERENCES**

- [1]. Biadacz R and Biadacz M (2015) The Use of Modern Information Technology in Tourist Information Systems on the Example of City of Czestochowa. International Conference on Communication, Management and Information Technology (ICCMIT 2015). Czestochowa University of Technology, Dabrowskiego 69, 42-201 Czestochowa, Poland. *Procedia Computer Science* (65): 1105-1113.
- [2]. Badone E and Roseman SR (2004). Approaches to the Anthropology of Pilgrimage and Tourism. In: Badone E and Roseman SR (eds.) *Intersecting journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage and Tourism*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1-23.
- [3]. Dowson R (2020) Religious Pilgrimage: Experiencing Places, Objects and Events. *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*. 8(6): 4.
- [4]. Evans NH (1976) Tourism and Cross Cultural Communication. *Annals of Tourism Research*. 3(4): 189-198.
- [5]. Eade J (1992) Pilgrimage and Tourism at Lourdes, France. *Annals of Tourism Research*. 19(1): 18-32.
- [6]. Secall R (2003) The Origins of Religious Tourism: Special Reference to the Saint James's Way Tourism. In: Fernandes C, Mcgettigan F and Edwards J (eds) *Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*, Tourism Board of Leiria/Fátima, Fátima. Portugal: AtlasSpecial Interest Group.
- [7]. Mihajlovic I (2017) The Importance of Local Events for Positioning of Tourist Destination. *European Journal of Social Science Education and Research*. 4(4): 228-239.
- [8]. Morpeth ND (2007) Case Study 3: Ancient and Modern Pilgrimage: El Camino Frances. In: Raj R and Morpeth DN (eds) *Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Management: An International Perspective*. CABI Publishing, Wallingford, 153-160.
- [9]. News paper and magazines
- [10]. Shinde K (2006) Religious Tourism: Intersection of Contemporary Pilgrimage and Tourism in India. In: *Journeys of Expression V: Tourism and the Roots/Routes of Religious Festivity Conference Proceedings CDRom*, Sheffield Hallam University.
- [11]. Timothy D and Olsen D (2006) Management Issues for Religious Heritage Attractions. In: Timothy D and Olsen D (eds) *Tourism, Religious and Spiritual Journeys*. New York: Routledge, 104-118.