

2020

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Recommended Citation

Dhamija, Aruna (2020) "The Increasing Significance of Religious Tourism: A Case from Uttar Pradesh, India," *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*: Vol. 8: Iss. 8, Article 12.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.21427/dp8y-hk65>

Available at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/ijrtp/vol8/iss8/12>

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The Increasing Significance of Religious Tourism: A Case from Uttar Pradesh, India

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Tourism, in its numerous forms is a major source of income for various nations. India is no exception to this. Within some countries, a few states bring the major chunk of tourists. Uttar Pradesh is one such state for India which, on the virtue of its diversity, population and geographical size, has been at the forefront of attracting tourists from not only the country but globally. There has been a consistent shift in the profile of visiting tourists as they have displayed a marked change from those seeking recreational activities to those who visit a tourist destination owing to its religious significance. The present research study is an attempt in this direction whereby rigorous work has been carried out by empirically analysing secondary data employing such tools as Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Regression. Compound annual growth rate has been used to evaluate the comparison of religious tourism and general / non-religious tourism. It is important to understand overall tourism as well as religious tourism to arrive at various results which could be utilised by stakeholders like government agencies, religious bodies & shrines, hospitality industry players and other concerned entities. The study examines the total influx of tourists in Uttar Pradesh along with exploring the data according to various parameters such as international, religious and recreational tourists and derives findings that note the increased speed of international tourists which has surpassed that of domestic tourists in recent years (2014-18). Also, the contribution of religious tourists in the overall tourist numbers in the state has gone up considerably with time thus implying that the concerned bodies would do well if they serve this segment of tourists. The findings of the study, along with their implications, point in this direction.

Key Words: tourism, religious, spiritual, domestic, international, Analysis of Variance

Introduction

Tourism has undergone continuous development in the past decades in particular, there has been much diversification. This has resulted in it becoming one of the biggest contributors to the economy globally. Across the globe, it is viewed as one of the leading economic activities. Some even believe that it could be the largest contributor to the service sector. Lawrance (1992) opines that places have always been close to the human mind and tourists explore various destinations known for a certain product, cause or religious outlook. Massive employment opportunities have been generated due to tourism, thereby resulting in changed social aspects everywhere. In many countries, a good proportion of national income originates from the tourism sector. The significance of tourism can be understood if one considers the fact that it is responsible for the income being generated from the tourists consuming goods as well as services along with the taxes paid by businesses operating in the tourism industry.

The economic implications pertaining to tourism are increasingly being taken into consideration by the public as well as business organisations at multiple levels. Being among the leading industries globally, tourism has had quite significant impacts on the overall social fabric. The impacts caused due to tourism are segregated into seven general categories by Glenn Kreag who is affiliated to the University of Minnesota. He presented a report on the same in the year 2001 (Kreag, 2001). These impacts are Social and Cultural, Community attitudes, Economic, Environmental, Services, Taxes, Crowding and Congestion. He further goes on to proclaim that each of these factors has both positive as well as negative aspects.

Tourism can be viewed as a major force to reckon with in the context of an economy. It creates vast opportunities in such diversified sectors as infrastructure, hospitality, food and beverages, logistics (including transportation). It brings a positive overall influence on a state or nation's economic condition in addition to improving the infrastructure thanks to its appeal. Simultaneously,

although it is quite an attractive proposition, tourism brings with it a set of challenges and issues in the form of creating a transitory paucity of factors of production and accommodation facilities during the peak season. It puts strain on the local infrastructure as well as transportation. It results in a rise in the price levels which might be unsustainable for locals and hence unwarranted. Taking all of this into consideration, adopting a scientific outlook is needed to explore the probable influences which tourism could have on a nation's economy.

One aspect of tourism which could be discussed at length for its significance has to be religious tourism as it has multiple ramifications. Scott (2012) opines that sacred spaces have existed since times immemorial across the globe and have acted as active sites for undertaking pilgrimage by devotees of various religions. Osterrieth (1997) has talked about how certain countries have been able to position their religious destinations as tourist attractions and have been viewed accordingly by devotees. Coleman and Elsner (1995) have highlighted how pilgrimage sites, related to various world religions, from the past as well as the present, are frequented by their followers. This is particularly true for a country like India which is home to almost every major world religion, having major shrines and religious tourism destinations for each one of them.

Feldhaus (2003) has talked extensively about how the various religious destinations in India have provided unique identities to the cities, thus leading to geographic distinction. Granoff and Shinohara (2004) talk about the various Asian destinations which are patronised by the followers of various religions. Indian religious places featuring prominently among them. The country is blessed with a varied natural topography and a predominantly religious population, which mean it is inundated with worship places and centres. People like to pay their respects, meditate and carry out their religious activities at such destinations. However, until recently, the economic impact of this was not paid much heed either by the central government or the state governments. It is only recently that they have realised how much revenue could be generated if this sector is suitably leveraged. Barring a few wealthy shrines and boards in the country, the majority of sites are not cared for by the various governments, due to lack of interest or other reasons. The same is the case for the researchers who work in the area of religious tourism who have showed little or no interest in many religious destinations. Due to such apathy on the part of both the governments and the researchers, the

income derived from religious tourism remains largely unaccounted for along with being unorganised. This results in fiscal deficit on the part of the public exchequer as it loses out on such a valuable revenue stream.

Jesurajan and Prabhu (2012) are of the firm opinion that each state of India, howsoever small it is, has a lot of unutilised or underutilised potential which could be explored and utilised based on their natural setting and religious significance. Hancock (2001) has highlighted innumerable experiences of festivities and religious occasions encountered in the southern part of India. Jackowski (1991) has outlined the various pilgrimage destinations found in Hinduism, traversing across the length and breadth of the nation. However, the majority of these religious tourism destinations are not given the significance which they deserve. Such is not the case for the religious tourism destinations abroad, as the governments in those nations, unlike India, understand the importance of such shrines and places and develop them on the lines of other tourist attractions (Mihajlovic, 2017). There exist serious problems and deficiencies which leave a lot to be desired in this regard. The author is of the view that conducting a detailed study and carrying out a thorough analysis would enable the realisation of the full potential of such religious tourism places, thereby resulting in a win-win scenario for all stakeholders. The public system which is in the doldrums due to apathy, has lost out on ensuring monetary benefits and generation of employment opportunities in this industry (Wilder-Smith, 2006). This is a pressing issue that needs to be addressed, taking into consideration the abysmal rate at which employment opportunities are being generated in India.

The present work is an attempt in this direction to suggest the manner in which the religious tourism sector could be reoriented. This would align India well with such nations where it is an economic force to reckon with. The research explores the work of authors who have opined on the various aspects related to religious tourism. Also, the significance which it has in the overall build-up of society on numerous levels remains within the realms of this paper. Further, the research superimposes this thought process on the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. This is done in terms of the flow of tourists (foreign as well as domestic) visiting the state in connection with religious tourism and how the statistics have changed over the past few years. Thus, emphasis has been on the increasing position of religious tourism towards the shaping of state affairs, economic and otherwise.

Review of Literature

There has been a multitude of studies measuring the significance of pilgrimage tourism. Many authors have been of the opinion that a steady flow of pilgrims influences such consecrated destinations in myriad ways (Din, 1989; Rinschede, 1992; Vukonic, 1996; Walpole & Goodwin, 2000; Collins-Kreiner & Gatrell, 2006). Kotler, Bowen and Makens (2014) are of the opinion that hospitality and tourism can benefit from marketing principles much on the lines of a regular product. Timothy and Olsen (2006) have propounded how tourism and religion have become intertwined over time, with spirituality playing a crucial role in this regard. Badone and Roseman (2004) have chronicled the various aspects related to pilgrimage which have been interspersed with tourism over the period of time.

A model proposed by Shinde (2006) highlights the dynamics of pilgrimage tourism. The model explains how pilgrimage tourists interact with the locals and the impacts arising out of such interactions for all the concerned parties. This leads to a favourable scenario for all stakeholders. The model plays out the immediate impact which such expeditions have on the environment (Lawrence, 1992). Not only this, such interactions also have a far-reaching indirect influence on the societal setting and economic aspects. The most telling influence results from the actual visit which the pilgrimage tourist carries out to the said destination thereby coming in direct contact with the various religious establishments.

Evans (1976) opines that the religious institutions are well and truly the most compelling reason for visiting such pilgrim destinations, there are other reasons too which a pilgrimage tourist looks forward to. These could be the hotels, the travel agencies, the food and beverage outlets and the shops selling souvenirs, (particularly, the trade related to religious mementos such as holy water (Maseeh, 2002), statuettes and candles) which provide a constant source of income to the local populace thus further enhancing the significance of such pilgrimages. Equally important, religious sites are responsible for bringing handsome income to the local community (Vijayanand, 2012). Lourdes in France and Assisi in Italy are cases in point (Fleischer & Felsenstein, 2000).

Mihajlović and Vidak (2017) opine that local events play a significant role with regard to promoting a place as a tourist destination and this is very much applicable to religious events as well. At the same time, Secall

(2003) is of the opinion that human history is replete with instances where pilgrimage has been responsible for bringing a materialistic outlook to spiritual exploits. The impact on the economy, thanks to religious tourism, could be on similar lines as that created by leisure tourism for the reason that religious tourism too leads to creation of jobs, boost in the local populace and development of infrastructure.

Lourdes, a Catholic site, could be cited as an example wherein pilgrimage tourism can very well influence the growth of the local population. 140 different nations send some 6 million pilgrims every year to Lourdes (Eade, 1992) resulting in a consistent rise in the population. This has existed as a famous pilgrimage destination since 1858. In contrast, the adjoining cities have not even remotely shown such changes, thus, indicating the impact of employment opportunities linked to the constant influx of people to this place (Rinschede, 1992).

Biadacz and Biadacz (2015) throw light on the pilgrimage site of Czestochowa in Poland which has a population of 225,000 but attracts more than 4.5 million pilgrims, almost 18 times that of its population, owing to its religious and spiritual significance. All this massively improves the local infrastructure too (Jackowski & Smith, 1992).

It is clear that religious shrines and destinations have been the places to visit for pilgrimage tourists due to their ancient history. Malville (2009) has talked about how pilgrimage has been redefined in recent years presenting the sacred landscapes across countries in myriad ways. Yan and Ho (2017) point out how tour leaders, or those who are at the forefront of travel, shape the narrative of those visiting a religious destination. At the same time, there are instances when all of a sudden there is a chance discovery of an ancient pilgrimage or religious site which results in spiked interest in it from across the world. Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina falls under this category. Vukonic (1992, 1996, 2002) has stated in several studies and highlighted how this sudden discovery led to a massive upsurge in the accommodation-related expenditure at the destination. Aktas and Ekin (2007) have highlighted that due to profound importance among those who follow the Islam religion, Mecca has emerged as the second-largest source of revenue for Saudi Arabia, just behind oil, generating revenues to the tune of \$8 billion annually. Due to this huge revenue potential, the country has committed resources to the extent of \$35 billion in the past three decades thereby ensuring

better amenities for those visiting the holy destination (Kuslivan, Kuslivan, Ilhan & Buyruk, 2010). At the same time, as highlighted in the introduction part of the present research paper, pilgrimage tourism has its downfalls too as presented by Wilder-Smith (2006) in the case of Mecca. The prohibitory cost of undertaking the holy trip, Umra or Hajj, puts a lot of financial strain on those who can hardly afford it. Such pilgrims either have to resort to support by their home nation governments like in India, or take loans to undertake this holy trip at least once in their lifetime. The augmented numbers resulting from more devotees visiting Mecca with each passing year have resulted in huge demand for the local currency, Saudi Riyal, leading to its black marketing. The valuation of the Saudi Riyal has increased substantially in the past few years owing to the pressures generated by its demand by the visiting pilgrims. The resulting deficiency of cash forcing the banks to deny even small amounts to the genuine travellers. Rashid (2007) further elaborates that taking all these facts into consideration, such vices as gambling have been prohibited. The government tries its level best to stop profit-booking due to uncertainty and speculation.

Acculturation and cultural commoditisation can be the by-products of large influxes of pilgrim tourists resulting in social and local economic changes (Ichaporria, 1983; Joseph & Kavoori, 2001; Cohen, 1988). The genuine pilgrim tourists visiting Sri Lanka have been largely replaced by leisure tourists (Pffaffenberger, 1983). This has led to the combination of pilgrimage with leisure (Singh, 2005). Shinde (2006, 2007) talks about how one of the immensely popular destinations for Hindu pilgrims, Vrindavan in Uttar Pradesh has made vast improvements with regard to transportation and accessibility, replacing, to a large extent, the pure pilgrimage which was carried out barefoot. Simultaneously, Shinde (2007) also highlights how improved conditions have resulted in entrepreneurs opening hotels and tour operations in the neighbourhood of these most-visited holy shrines and temples, adversely affecting the sacredness and sanctity of these places. Similarly, Dubey (2000) highlights the significance of sacred places in the Indian city of Allahabad (currently known as Prayagraj). The city is as much known for its religious pilgrimage sites as it is known for its rivers and other tourist destinations.

Morpeth (2007) talks about yet another issue which has come to adversely influence pilgrimage tourism in relation to *El Camino*, Spain. Here, secularisation was accelerated by promoting Santiago as the initial European Cultural

Route at the cost of the religious beliefs associated with the place. Crain (1992) talks about the problems faced by the local populace which resulted due to the conversion of local religious rituals to festivals of national significance.

The positive influences which result from pilgrimage tourism act as a stimulant for the local residents. They conserve their heritage as well as preserve their religious shrines and sites. They ensure that visiting pilgrims are not left disappointed from the poor upkeep of the religious monuments. This also acts as saving grace for such religious sites and helps in ensuring their conservation to the best possible extent (Cohen, 1998). The local populace benefits in terms of the unprivileged or less-privileged segments of the society getting better living conditions. In this context, it would be pertinent to observe that the city of Lisbon, Portugal hosts a massive religious feast every year at the Town Hall named 'The Feast of St Anthony' where sponsored weddings of the poor couples take place. Tilson (2001) highlights how in the year 2000 when the world entered the twenty-first century saw the solemnization of vows for 2000 couples. Many more thousands visited Lisbon to witness parades, religious processions and other related events which took place in the entire city marking its significance in the tourist calendar of the city.

From the above extensive review of literature, it could be inferred that pilgrimage tourism and related activities have both positive as well as negative connotations. They have impact on the local economy, environment and population as well. The phenomenon of religious tourism is no different in this regard and both are used interchangeably for the purpose of carrying out studies. Religious tourists also undertake pilgrimage when they visit a religious destination which has historical importance (Dowson, 2020).

Uttar Pradesh as a Religious Tourist Hub

The Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, situated in the northern territory of the country, is home to more than 200 million people making it the most populous state in the country. The state is a melting pot of culture and religion where people from different faiths and beliefs reside in harmony with each other. Religion is a special point of reference in the state and it has religious destinations, shrines and places which are held in the highest regard by those practicing various religions. Hindu devotees have multiple places of spirituality and devotion spread across the length and breadth of the fourth-largest state

in the nation. Some of the Hindu pilgrimages, shrines and temples are world famous and attract hordes of religious tourists; both from the country and abroad, round-the-year. A number of cities are considered holy due to the virtue of the places of worship, meditation and spiritualism and cover the entire state. Some of the key sites are Mathura-Vrindavan, Varanasi, Ayodhya, Sarnath.

It is not as if these cities have holy destinations only for one community. Uttar Pradesh had been under the control of rulers from various religions over time. Thus the holy cities are dotted with places of worship which are revered by every community. Religious significance foremost in the mind while discussing these important cities. The geographical landscape, the exquisite nature of topography adds a lot to the overall appeal of these destinations when they are considered by the religious tourists. Then there are the annual processions, fairs, festivals and events of significance which are also a part of the overall spiritual experience.

The state has done wonders in the field of tourism, thanks to its second position in the entire nation in terms of overall tourist footfall. This has become possible because the visiting tourists come to the state due to a multitude of reasons, be it religious, spiritual, meditation, relaxation, tranquillity, the list goes on. Also, not only those who are religiously inclined visit the state, there are those people who don't believe in any specific religion or thought process but still visit the state for the purpose of seeking inner peace or for spiritual reasons. The serene surroundings of these destinations, coupled with the element of divinity, lead to achieving eternal bliss and harmony between one's soul and body.

Research Methodology

The research paper is primarily based on secondary data. The data have been collected from the statistical reports (Table 1) of the official website of U.P. Tourism, Government of Uttar Pradesh, India. The data, have been utilised for descriptive analysis, resulting in many tables and graphs as explained in the following sections. The paper focuses on improving the position of religious tourism towards the shaping of state affairs, both economic and otherwise. The primary objective of the study is to examine the performance of tourism in Uttar Pradesh. To achieve the objective, the main groups were compared (domestic and international, religious tourists and the total number of tourists) through ANOVA. The

time period of the study is from 2014 to 2018. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) is an extension of the t-test and a method for exploring survey or experiment results (Sow, 2014). In the present work, the purpose of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) is to investigate and test the existence of significant relationships between various groups (domestic and international, religious tourists and the total number of tourists) of the population. Performance in tourism sector has been examined through the growth of tourists during the period of study. To analyse the growth, regression has been used because regression is a statistical method that supports estimate direction and strength of the relationship between two or more variables. Data have been digitised through SPSS version 24. To find the correlation and annual comparison between religious and non-religious / general tourism, compound annual growth rate has been used. On the basis of the resulting data analysis, discussions and conclusions are presented.

Research Question and Hypotheses

Though the point of the present case is to validate the increasing importance of religious tourism across the nation, on virtue of being one of the largest states of the country, Uttar Pradesh was considered as the focal point of the case to corroborate the growing momentum of tourism as well as to validate that the focus has shifted towards religious tourism, with the major portion comprising domestic and international tourists visiting for religious purposes.

RQ: Does there exist a statistically significant contribution of religious tourists in the cumulative count of domestic and international tourists coming to Uttar Pradesh?

To test the research question, the following framework has been employed. Three hypotheses were formulated.

H1: The growth rate of domestic tourists and international tourists visiting Uttar Pradesh is significantly increasing.

H2: The growth rate of religious tourists is increasing in Uttar Pradesh over the past period of time.

H3: There is a significant contribution of religious tourists in the total number of tourists visiting Uttar Pradesh.

These were subsequently tested with the help of analysis of variance (ANOVA) which validated the initial assumption, that is, religious tourism is indeed a force to reckon with, thus, making an important influence on the

Table 1: Tourist Visits in Prominent Cities of Religious Value in Uttar Pradesh 2014-2018
U.P. Tourism, Government of Uttar Pradesh, India

Tourist Place	2014				2015				2016				2017				2018			
	Domestic	International	Total	Intern.	Domestic	Intern.	Total	Intern.	Domestic	Intern.	Total	Intern.	Domestic	Intern.	Total	Intern.	Domestic	Intern.	Total	
	Batschwar	850000	1550	851550	1800	876800	1800	878600	2000	897000	2000	899000	2100	898100	2100	898100	2100	914270	2297	916567
Mathura	6620500	24950	6645450	25000	6651000	25000	6651000	25100	6651000	25100	6651000	25100	6651000	25100	6651000	25100	7253305	27910	7688210	
Vrindavan	4015000	19050	4034050	12600000	47890	12647890	48000	12698000	48000	12698000	48000	12698000	48000	12698000	48000	13788500	14850200	53980	14901180	
Govaradhan	8450000	4850	8454850	12050000	8500	12058500	8600	12098600	8600	12098600	8600	12098600	8600	12098600	8600	13178215	15989700	10660	16000360	
Kusum Sarovar	2366000	1460	2367460	2375000	1500	2376500	1550	2379550	1550	2379550	1550	2379550	1550	2379550	1550	2593665	2729550	1870	2731420	
Barsana	3302000	1870	3303870	3310500	1900	3312400	3316000	1950	3317950	3614440	2070	3616510	3885400	2200	3887600					
Nandgaon	1881500	1380	1882880	1890000	1400	1891400	1894000	1420	1895420	2064460	1505	2065965	2184200	1560	2185760					
Radhakand	4190000	1800	4191800	1030000	1100	1031100	1033000	1120	1033120	1124880	1185	1126065	1160150	1215	1161365					
Mahavan	4300000	470	4300470	4400000	480	4400480	4400000	500	4400500	4850000	530	4850530	5102500	555	5108055					
Kaaganj (Souraj)	4500000	5000	4505000	5200000	10000	5200000	5200000	11580	5262580	5040000	13500	5053500	5080265	13620	5093885					
Total (Braj Region)	37630000	63460	37693460	50956500	101520	51058020	51058020	105970	52755970	56633950	112475	56746425	61923985	119332	62043317					
Prayagraj	35605966	107141	35713107	40001670	109281	40110951	41146674	109571	41256245	41764987	109675	41874662	44668662	146805	44815467					
Kaushambi	184180	8485	192665	193385	14229	207614	207807	15390	223197	2156033	15621	2171654	2160629	15659	2176288					
Total (Prayag Region)	35790146	115626	35905772	40195055	123510	40318565	41354481	124961	41479442	43921020	125296	44046316	46829291	162464	46991755					
Varanasi	5202236	287761	5489997	5413927	302370	5716397	5716397	312519	5912665	5947355	334708	6282063	6095890	348970	6448460					
Mirzapur	796463	338	796801	807012	386	807398	831310	386	831696	915957	604	916561	928968	678	929646					
Sonbadra	785100	925	786025	797530	935	798465	802146	952	803098	919490	1052	920542	920080	1120	921700					
Bhadholi (Sant Ravidas Nagar)	22500	195	22695	22721	197	22918	22918	201	23600	36251	212	36463	39191	220	39411					
Attabhaja	2418800	1430	2420230	2420500	1435	2421935	2425500	1440	2426940	2430500	1445	2431945	2430827	1502	2432329					
Sarnath	899457	374268	1273725	924552	388102	1312654	957320	409242	1366562	1024589	430682	1455221	1070035	435752	1505787					
Jaunpur	695284	12855	708139	695592	12882	708474	695666	12904	708570	698214	12985	711199	704832	13173	718005					
Vindhyachal	3860000	2530	3862530	3875000	2535	3877535	3891000	2540	3893540	3905000	2545	3907545	3905120	2618	3907738					
Shamshahi	505714	203	505917	790581	356	790937	790581	356	790937	925866	344	926210	1175879	433	1176312					
Gahsuar (Kamakshi Devi Gajpur)	605384	0	605384	606240	0	606240	606240	0	606240	606712	0	606712	606712	0	607221					
Total (Kashi Region)	15790938	680505	16471443	16353645	709198	17062843	16771189	740528	17511717	17659947	7846666	18444613	17998207	804508	18702715					
Nimsar	1460000	46	1460046	1630000	53	1630053	1640000	57	1640057	1921000	63	1921063	10156150	1277	10157427					
Bithoor	234530	442	234972	253021	546	253567	253567	580	2540950	1085148	900	1086048	1582314	2084	1584398					
Sankia	80940	25257	106097	84710	26332	111042	85410	27860	113270	199277	26901	226178	200703	27012	227115					
Total (Lucknow Region)	1775370	25745	1801115	1967731	26931	1994662	2179120	28497	2207617	3205425	278664	3233289	11939167	30373	11969540					
Garhmukteshwar (Hapur)	1348110	0	1348110	1402750	0	1402750	1466960	0	1466960	1540310	0	1540310	1617550	0	1617550					
Hastinapur	1187470	0	1187470	1247530	0	1247530	1311975	0	1311975	1377570	0	1377570	1446510	0	1446510					
Pura Mahadeva (Bagpat)	896850	0	896850	946200	0	946200	995800	0	995800	1045590	0	1045590	1097800	0	1097800					
Brajhat (Garhmukteshwar)	2992500	0	2992500	3119700	0	3119700	4249100	0	4249100	4461500	0	4461500	4684800	0	4684800					
Shakumbhari Devi	4096500	119	4096619	4270600	125	4270725	4445700	131	4445831	4667980	138	4668118	4901500	145	4901645					
Total (Meerut Region)	10521430	119	10521549	10996780	125	10996905	12469535	131	12469666	13092950	138	13093088	13748160	145	13748305					
Mahadeva (Barabanki)	1706611	0	1706611	1756660	0	1756660	1893568	0	1893568	2202219	0	2202219	2456599	0	2456599					
Apudhya (Sri Ram Jann Sthal)	14361499	16848	14378347	15432558	19077	15451635	15482456	20979	15503435	17549633	23926	17573559	19217571	27043	19244614					
Shrawasti	111224	98951	210175	114020	100070	214090	116588	106013	222661	120828	137184	258012	982805	149304	1132109					
Devscharif	501313	0	501313	521358	0	521358	525581	0	525581	608097	0	608097	714705	0	714705					
Devipatan, Tulsiapur (Bairampur)	281245	0	281245	281867	0	281867	282057	0	282057	305797	0	305797	506516	0	506616					
Total (Ayodhya Region)	16961892	115799	17077691	18106463	119147	18225610	18300250	126992	18427242	20786574	161110	20947684	23878296	176347	24054643					
Gorakhpur	2286933	36160	2323093	2314243	35452	2349695	2346121	35638	2381759	2405705	36249	2441954	2753546	38715	2792621					
Kushinagar (Padrauna)	774872	65435	840307	805553	68830	874383	825218	73514	898732	861760	76221	937981	897546	80147	977693					
Kapilvastu (Piprahava)	164125	30455	194580	173750	30820	204570	9490	31213	40703	10310	32064	42374	11048	43839						
Maa	2083248	1750	2085000	2106850	9	2106859	2135994	1286	2137286	2162982	1504	2164486	2164471	1587	2165978					
Siddharthnagar	797250	1750	799000	806555	1836	808391	931854	1912	933766	1157101	1940	1159041	1191514	2496	1194010					
Bhadrav Doo Sthal Azamgarh	1112000	0	1112000	1114000	0	1114000	1118000	0	1118000	1120000	0	1120000	1138600	0	1138600					
Total (Gorakhpur Region)	7218528	133800	7352328	7330951	136947	7457898	7366677	143563	7510240	7717858	147978	7865836	8156725	155656	8312381					
Grand Total	125688304	1135054	126823358	145887125	1217378	147108194	151091252	1270642	152361894	163017224	1359527	164377251	184378831	1448825	185822676					

Source: Statistical Report, UP Tourism

Table 2: Year-wise Data on Domestic and International Tourist visits Uttar Pradesh

Year	Number of tourists			Percentage Increase (+)/ Reduce (-) in comparison to last year		
	Domestic	International	Total	Domestic	International	Total
2014	184,277,423	2,909,735	187,187,158	-19.11	-9.23	-18.97
2015	206,515,617	3,104,062	209,619,679	12.06	6.67	11.98
2016	213,544,204	3,156,812	216,701,016	3.4	1.69	3.37
2017	233,977,619	3,556,204	237,533,823	9.56	12.65	9.61
2018	285,079,848	3,780,752	288,860,600	21.84	6.31	21.6

NOTE-1: Tourist Numbers in Maha Kumbh Snan / Mela, Allahabad in 2013 (January- March) data was as follows: Indian Tourists - 7,83,15,500 and Foreign Tourists - 3,50,000 (Cumulative Tourists- 7,86,65,500)
NOTE-2: Cumulative Foreign & Indian Tourists Coming to Uttar Pradesh in 2014 shrunk as compared to 2013 owing to high footfall during the Maha Kumbh Snan / Mela Allahabad in 2013.

(Source: Statistical Report, UP Tourism)

entire tourism industry which has gained traction over a period of time. Picard and Wood (1997) observed that the government has taken every possible measure to promote both international and domestic tourism as a means towards ensuring everlasting growth on multiple counts.

Findings

Table 2 shows the annual number of tourists visiting Uttar Pradesh. In comparison to 2013, the number of tourists decreased in 2014 (the reason highlighted in Note 2). Between 2015 and 2018, the number of tourists increased. The highest percentage of increment was observed in 2018 whereas the lowest increment was observed in 2016.

ANOVA was applied to check the variation between the number of domestic and international tourists annually. The value of ANOVA was not significant for the years ($F = 1.03$, $p = 0.48$), which exhibits no significant difference between the number of tourists annually. On the other hand, ANOVA was significant for the different tourist numbers ($F = 171.45$, $p = 0.000$) as shown in Table 3. This is significant at a 1% level of significance which

means that there is a significant difference between the international and domestic tourists.

The growth rate of the domestic tourists and international tourists was analysed by applying regression. The intercept value for domestic tourists is 2.25 and for the international tourists is 2.91 (which is greater than the intercept value of domestic tourists). It means that the international tourists growth rate is higher than the domestic tourists growth rate. Hence, H_1 is accepted and the growth rate of domestic tourists and international tourists visiting Uttar Pradesh is significantly increasing.

Figure 1 shows the domestic tourists numbers visiting Uttar Pradesh. The volume of tourists was found to be increasing consistently. There is a great increment in the number of tourists from 2014 to 2018.

Figure 2 shows the number of international tourists visiting Uttar Pradesh. The number of tourists is increasing. There is a great increment in the number of tourists from 2014 to 2018.

Table 3: Summary of ANOVA: Two Populations (Domestic and International Tourists)

Sources of Variation	Df	MS	F	P-value	F critical
Year	4	7.40762E+14	1.036622849	0.486515	6.388233
Number of tourists (Domestic and International Tourists)	1	1.2252E+17	171.4544586	0.00019	7.70864

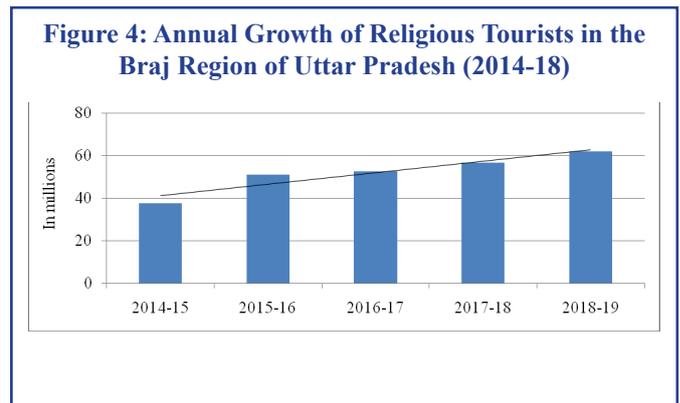
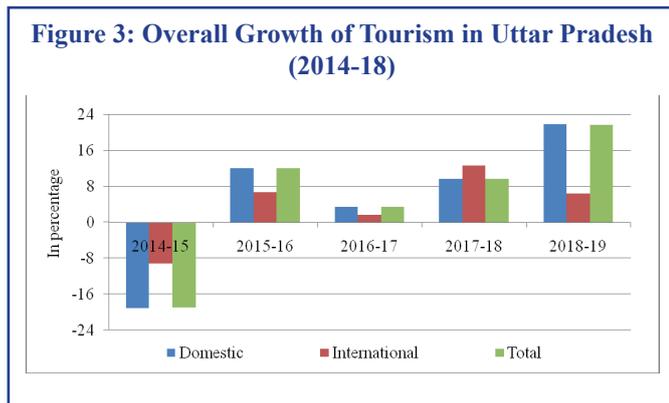
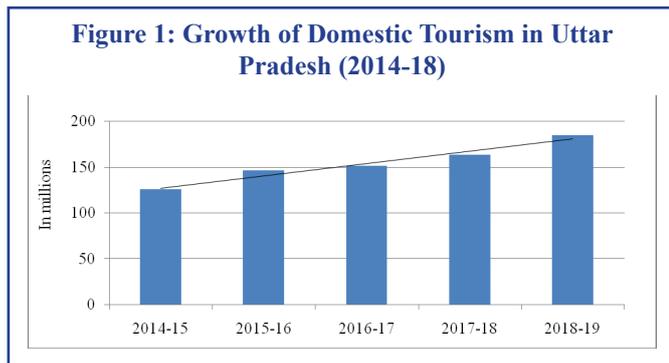


Figure 3 shows the total number of tourists visiting Uttar Pradesh along with comparison from the previous year. The number of tourists is found to be less in 2014 in comparison to the previous year 2013. However, from 2015 onwards, the number of tourists is found to be higher in comparison to the previous year for each of 2016, 2017 and 2018. The increment in 2016 is lower in comparison to the preceding year 2015.

Table 4 depicts the variation between the numbers of tourists visiting religious places of Uttar Pradesh annually and was analyzed by ANOVA. Application of ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) revealed that there is a significant difference in number of tourist across different years, which is statistically significant ($F = 157.41, p = 0.000$). Similarly, ANOVA results also showed that the number of tourist visits across different religious places also significantly increased. It is also found to be statistically significant ($F = 6.63, p = 0.000$). This implies that tourism at religious places significantly increased in India

Hence, **H2** is accepted thus implying that the growth rate of religious tourists is going up in Uttar Pradesh over the past period of time.

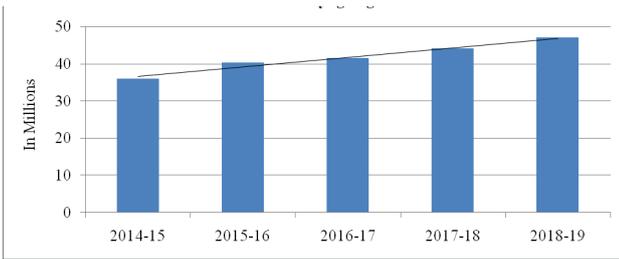
Regional Growth Rates.

Braj Region: Figure 4 shows the tourists numbers coming to the Braj region in Uttar Pradesh. The number of tourists is increasing consistently. There is a great increment in the number of tourists from 2014 to 2016 and subsequently less increment is observed in other years. The increase in domestic tourists in the region is 3.38% and for international tourists, it is 3.30%. Thus, the increase tourists from the domestic circle is higher than the increase in pace of tourists from an international circle.

Prayagraj Region: Figure 5 shows the overall number of tourists visiting the Prayagraj region. The number of tourists is increasing. There is a great increment in the number of tourists from 2014 to 2018. The increase in domestic tourists in the region is 3.77% and for

Sources of Variation	Df	MS	F	P-value	F critical
Years	6	1.6117E+15	157.4159582	4.65914E-18	2.508189
Number of religious tourists	4	6.7884E+13	6.630242162	0.000964188	2.776289

Figure 5: Annual Growth of Religious Tourists in Prayag Region of Uttar Pradesh (2014-18)

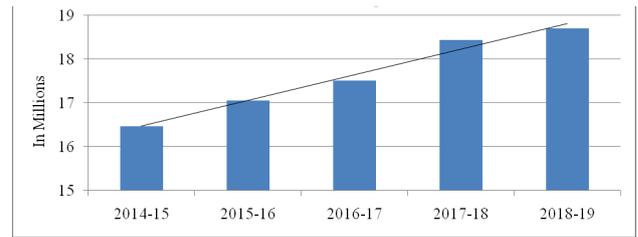


international tourists it is 1.93%. Thus, the increase in pace of domestic tourists is more as compared to the increase in pace of tourists from an international circle.

Kashi Region: Figure 6 shows the number of tourists visiting the Kashi region of Uttar Pradesh. The number of tourists is increasing. There is a great increment in the number of tourists from 2014 to 2018. The increase in domestic tourists in the region is 3.29% and for international tourists it is 3.86%. Thus, the increase in tourists from an international circle is more than domestic tourists.

Lucknow Region: Figure 7 shows tourist numbers coming to the Lucknow region. The number of tourists is increasing. There is a great increment in the number of tourists from 2017 to 2018. The increase in domestic tourists in the region is 1.20% and for international tourists it is 2.37%. Thus, the increase in international tourists is higher than domestic tourists.

Figure 6: Annual Growth of Religious Tourists in Kashi Region of Uttar Pradesh (2014-18)



Meerut Region: Figure 8 shows the increase in tourist numbers coming to the Meerut region in Uttar Pradesh. An increment in the number of tourists is consistent from 2014 to 2018. The increase in domestic tourists region is 2.94% and for international tourists it is -8.88%. Thus, the change of international tourists is negative whereas there is an increase in domestic tourists.

Ayodhya Region: Figure 9 shows the number of tourists visiting the Ayodhya region. The number of tourists is increasing. The increment from 2015 to 2016 is nominal but is increases significantly from 2016 to 2018. The increase in domestic tourists is 1.13% and for international tourists it is 1.68%. Thus, international rates are higher when compared with domestic data.

Gorakhpur Region: Figure 10 shows the numbers visiting the Gorakhpur region. Overall, the number of tourists is increasing. There is a great increment in the

Figure 7: Annual Growth of Religious Tourists in Lucknow Region of Uttar Pradesh (2014-18)

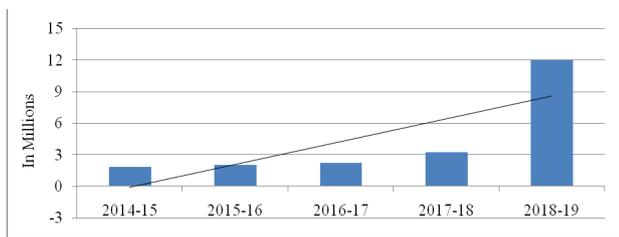


Figure 8: Annual Growth of Religious Tourists in Meerut Region of Uttar Pradesh (2014-18)

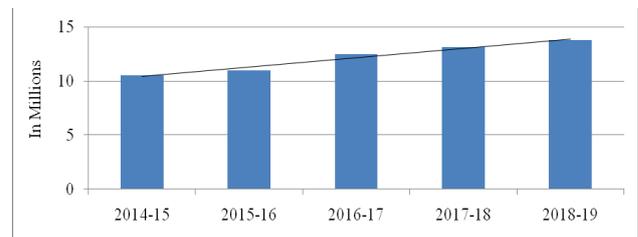


Figure 9: Annual Growth of Religious Tourists in Ayodhya Region of Uttar Pradesh (2014-18)

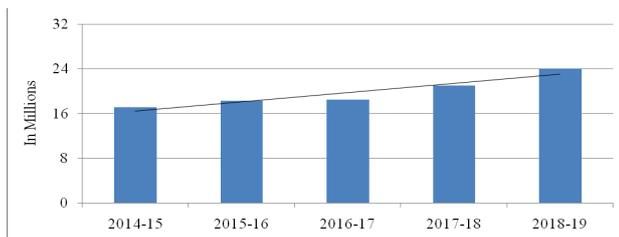


Figure 10: Annual Growth of Religious Tourists in Gorakhpur Region of Uttar Pradesh (2014-18)

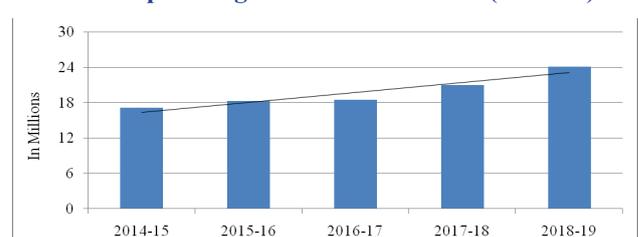


Table 5a: Year-wise Data of Tourists visiting Uttar Pradesh

(Religious and Total Tourists Visited)

Year	Tourists Visiting Religious Places	Total Tourists Visited
2014	126,823,358	187,187,158
2015	147,104,503	209,619,679
2016	152,361,894	216,701,016
2017	164,377,251	237,533,823
2018	185,822,656	288,860,600

Source: Statistical Report, UP Tourism

Table 5b: Summary of ANOVA: Two Populations

(Religious and Total Tourists Visited)

Sources of Variation	Df	MS	F	P-value	F critical
Years	4	1.80091E+15	11.55897201	0.01801	6.388233
Number of tourists (Religious and Total Tourists Visited)	1	1.32069E+16	84.76713006	0.000773	7.708647

number of tourists from 2016 to 2018. The increase in domestic tourists is 1.04% and for international tourists it is 0.08%. Thus, the increase in domestic is more as compared to international tourists.

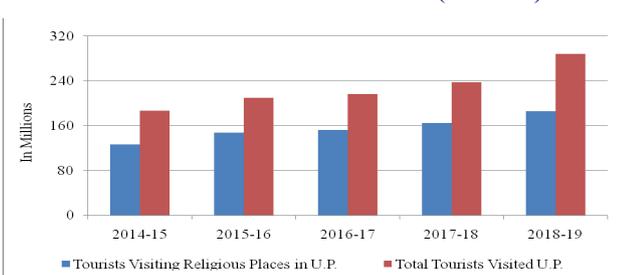
Numbers Visiting Religious Places

The variation between the number of tourists visiting religious places and the total number of tourists annually (Table 5a) was analysed by ANOVA as shown in table 5b. The value of ANOVA was significant for the years ($F = 11.55$, $p = 0.01$), which exhibits a significant difference between number of tourists year-wise. The increment in the number of tourists is significant. The difference between tourist numbers was significant ($F = 84.76$, $p = 0.000$). It is significant at a 1% level of significance which means that there exists a significant difference between tourists' numbers coming to religious places and total tourists' numbers.

The contribution of religious tourists in the total number of tourists is further analysed by regression. The results show that the total number of tourists is significantly affected ($F = 74.06$, $p = 0.003$) by the religious tourists. R square value shows that 96% variance in total tourists in Uttar Pradesh is explained by the religious tourists. Thus, religious tourists are continuously increasing, thereby forming a major portion of the total number of tourists in Uttar Pradesh.

Hence, **H3** is accepted thus implying that there is a significant contribution of religious tourists in the total number of tourists visiting Uttar Pradesh.

Figure 11 shows the tourist numbers coming to Uttar Pradesh, demonstrating that numbers are increasing consistently, with a related growth of religious tourists. There is a great increment in the number of tourists from 2014 to 2018.

Figure 11: Share of Religious Tourist Visit out of Total Tourist Visited Uttar Pradesh (2014-18)

Comparing Annual Growth Rate of Religious Tourists over Non-Religious/General Tourists

Compound Annual Growth Rate is used to determine the annual growth of Religious Tourists over Non-Religious / General Tourists where n represent the number of years

$$CAGR = \left(\frac{\text{Endingvalue}}{\text{intialvalue}} \right)^{1/n} - 1$$

Table 6 represents the growth of religious and non-religious tourism to analyse the annual growth rate. From 2014 to 2018, the compound annual growth of religious tourism has been 10.02% - religious tourism has been growing in the last five years. In 2014, more than 12 crores tourists visited religious places and this increased to more than 18 crores (one 'crore' = 100 lakhs or ten million, thus 18 crores = 180 million) in 2018. As far as tourists visiting Non-Religious / General places is concerned, CAGR has been 14.3%. It is important to note that the growth rate of non-religious tourists is more than the religious tourists but the total number of tourists who visited religious places is more than 75% of the overall tourist numbers. Therefore, the Annual growth rate of total tourists from 2014 to 2018 has been 11.45% year-on-year, which is very impressive.

Findings and Implications

The research question at the centre of the present study, is,

Does there exist a statistically significant contribution of religious tourists in the total number of domestic and international tourists visiting Uttar Pradesh

This stands validated in the context of the hypotheses tested in the preceding paragraphs. The findings are very much in tandem with this, thus implying that religious tourism has emerged as a force to reckon with in recent times (the time period taken into consideration in the present case is 2014-2018) in the state of Uttar Pradesh. This was found true for both international as well as domestic tourists visiting the state thereby suggesting that both set of tourists have found an inclination to visit the state for religious purposes. This highlights the enormous significance of the numerous religious spots and events which the state is home to and how promoting them to

the correct set of people could work well. Thus, the added learning for religious tourism research, emanating from the current study findings, is its important contribution to research activities in the overall area of tourism and the implications for different states of the country. Furthermore, it raises the importance of considering religious tourism linked with the growth rate of both domestic tourists and international tourists visiting Uttar Pradesh.

The first hypothesis,

The growth rate of domestic tourists and international tourists visiting Uttar Pradesh is increasing significantly

tands validated. ANOVA was conducted to find the relationship between domestic and international tourists visiting Uttar Pradesh. ANOVA was not significant for the years where the F statistic is 1.03 and is insignificant with $p = 0.48$, which shows that there is no significant difference between the number of tourists year-wise whereas ANOVA was significant with an F statistic of 171.45, and is statistically significant with $p = 0.000$ at 1% level of significance, thus, implying that there is a significant difference between the international and domestic tourist numbers visiting Uttar Pradesh, which are increasing at a reasonable pace. The growth rate showing a healthy growth was analysed by regression, where the Intercept value for domestic tourists is 2.25 and for international tourists is 2.91 - this indicates that the international tourist growth rate is higher than domestic tourist growth rate.

The second hypothesis was framed as

The growth of religious tourists is increasing in Uttar Pradesh over years'.

This was analysed, through ANOVA, and the value of ANOVA was significant for religious places ($F = 157.41$,

Table 6: Compound Annual Growth Rate of 5 years

Year	Religious Tourism	Non-Religious/General Tourism	Total
2014	126,823,358	60,363,800	187,187,158
2015	147,104,503	62,515,176	209,619,679
2016	152,361,894	64,339,122	216,701,016
2017	164,377,251	73,156,572	237,533,823
2018	185,822,656	103,037,944	288,860,600
CAGR	10.02%	14.30%	11.45%

$p=0.000$), which exhibits a significant difference between number of tourists visiting the different religious places of Uttar Pradesh. The value of ANOVA was significant for different years ($F = 6.63$, $p = 0.000$) at 1% level of a significance, thus, indicating that significant difference exists among tourists visiting in different years. The outcome of the present study based on analysis of the collected data was validated in this direction and established that the growth rate (regression was applied where the Intercept value for the domestic tourists is 2.25 and for the international tourists is 2.91 and verified through different graphs) of religious tourists visiting Uttar Pradesh has gone up consistently and at a higher rate than those visiting the state for non-religious purpose which is quite a revelation taking into consideration the implications which this could have for the various stakeholders.

The third hypothesis,

There is a significant contribution of the religious tourists in the total number of tourists visiting Uttar Pradesh

was also found to be applicable. The value of ANOVA was significant for the years ($F = 11.55$, $p = 0.01$) and thus, indicates that the number of tourists is increasing year-wise whereas the difference between tourist numbers was significant ($F = 84.76$, $p = 0.000$) at 1% level of significance, which implies that there exists a significant difference between tourist numbers coming to religious places and total tourist numbers. As per the regression results, there is 96% variance in total tourists in Uttar Pradesh. Thus, religious tourists are increasing steadily, thereby forming a major portion of the total number of tourists. This hypothesis also brought to the fore the ever-increasing significance of religious tourism by highlighting how the rate of growth of those visiting Uttar Pradesh for religious purposes was found to be higher than the growth rate of those visiting the state for recreational purposes. This is quite an astounding finding which, if used well, could channel the correct revenue sources and have other implications for the concerned stakeholders.

Another implication that could be made based on the findings is that the rate of growth of the international tourists visiting the state is more than the rate of growth of the domestic tourists. This implies that although the volume of those visiting the state from abroad is smaller compared to the domestic numbers, the rate at which

they are growing is higher than those visiting the state domestically. This is a really interesting finding and could go a long way in justifying the increased promotion of the state as a suitable visiting destination for tourists from abroad.

Yet another implication in this regard could be made about the growth rate of international versus the domestic tourists based on the analysis of data undertaken. In some regions, such as Braj, Prayagraj and Gorakhpur, the domestic tourist growth rate is higher when compared with the rate of growth of international tourists. On the other hand, the international tourist growth rate is higher than the domestic tourist growth rate in regions such as Kashi, Lucknow, Meerut and Ayodhya. Thus, four out of the seven tourist regions which are frequented by both types of tourists showed a higher growth rate of international tourists, implying foreign tourists are showing extra interest towards visiting the state for both religious as well as recreational purposes. The overall low levels of international compared to domestic tourists is well compensated by their overall keenness towards visiting.

Conclusion

This study offers evidence to validate the performance of the tourism sector in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. Similar studies can be conducted in the context of other states of India highlighting how to augment the number of tourists by creating their own set of challenges and issues which would become the benchmark for others to explore.

There exist multiple issues related to religious tourism which could be highlighted after sifting through the literature review in this study. These are all highly pertinent, in the context of the growing numbers of people travelling for religious purposes. Evidently, pilgrimage centres could be equated with religious sites, even though the meanings might change from context to context. As such, it would be rational to inspect contexts with regard to empowerment and power through legacy in the religious travel context. Similarly, issues pertaining to conservation, funding, authenticity of place, planning, interpretation, experience, and heritage contestation should be taken into account in potential research works (Digance 2003; Timothy & Boyd 2006) and would lead to a significant notion regarding the connect between tourism and religion.

As per the above discussion, it could be very well concluded that tourism, as a sector, has found many takers in recent years. This is particularly true for the most populous state of India, Uttar Pradesh. As the data presented and subsequently analysed has depicted, the state has been witnessing a steady stream of tourists over the past number of years. The time period taken for the present study lies between 2014 and 2018. What is characteristic here is to note that the immediate preceding year 2013 bore witness to the mega-event, namely, Maha Kumbh at Prayagraj, thereby explaining the fall in the year 2014 related to the total tourists' numbers visiting Uttar Pradesh. However, the situation has improved every year after that, thereby, affirming the rise of Uttar Pradesh as a preferred destination for tourists.

What is even more intriguing is the fact, as evident from the data presented and subsequently analysed, is the even higher growth of religious tourist numbers, the focus of the present study, as compared to leisure tourists. As the graphs above clearly demonstrate, the rate of increase of religious tourists visiting the state in connection with their religious or spiritual pursuits has been higher than those who visited the state for recreational purposes.

This is an important finding which should be noted by various stakeholders engaged in numerous ways, be it government agencies, various religious boards, shrines, hotel owners and other players in the tourism and hospitality industry. All would do well to take note of the findings of the present study and devise suitable strategies which would prepare them well to serve the increasing numbers of tourists.

Future Scope

Further studies highlighting the significance of religious tourism could be conducted in the context of other prominent Indian states such as Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, etc. which are home to many famous religious destinations for devotees from various religions. Also, a study could be conducted with regard to how destination management could be used to further the cause of a particular place. The present study could be extended with regard to managing the forthcoming religious congregations such as Khumbh 2021 and the different religious events throughout India.

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