

# Impact of Destination Awareness and Image on Tourism: Mata Vaishno Devi as a Spiritual Tourism Destination

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## Abstract

Tourism has played an important role in the economic growth of third-world countries. Tourism and Travel stimulate development in most underdeveloped regions, which depend mainly on agriculture and natural resources. It thus provides the benefit of generating employment and income while promoting culture, heritage and spirituality. Mata Vaishno Devi shrine is one amongst 108 Shakti Peethas dedicated to Durga, who is adored as Vaishno Devi Mata. The pilgrimage is the most visited shrine in India. The temple is a famous religious destination, but many tourists are unaware of its spiritual aspect. A spiritual journey to a destination impacts an individual on a personal level and works as therapy by giving a joyful experience to the tourist. Positioning Mata Vaishno Devi as a place that gives a comforting spiritual experience will further create a huge market for tourists from the western part of the world as well. This qualitative research comprises rich theoretical inputs from various historical and current sources and data collected through field visits and tourist interviews. The purpose of the paper is to understand the relationship between destination awareness on destination image from a spiritual tourist perspective. The paper also highlights the evolving and complex nature of spiritual tourism and brands Mata Vaishno Devi as a spiritual tourism destination. The study adopts a questionnaire survey of 700 tourists through a quota sampling technique. The data were analyzed using correlation and regression analysis. The results confirmed that there is a positive relationship between destination awareness and image. Implication for destination managers in Mata Vaishno Devi shrine will further suggest ways to make the spiritual tourist feel connected with this destination through strategic interventions and by demanding further research in the area.

**Keywords:** Destination awareness, Image, Mata Vaishno Devi, Spiritual, Tourists, Tourism.

## Introduction of Mata Vaishno Devi

The Vaishno Devi Temple is an important Hindu temple dedicated to Vaishno Devi located in Katra at the trikuta mountains within the Indian Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir (Rindani, Kirit 2016). During festivals like Navaratri, nearly one crore visitors come to seek blessings of the Deity. The temple is considered the wealthiest shrine in India. The annual income of the shrine is around \$16 million which comes from the offerings by devotees (Barnett and Stein). The temple is considered sacred to all Hindus. Mata Vaishno Devi (also known as Mata Rani, Trikuta, Ambe and Vaishnavi) is an incarnation of the

Hindu Mother Goddess, Devi. The words "Mata" and "Maa" are referred commonly to as mother in India. and are used in relation to Vaishno Devi. The word Vaishnavi is created by combining Kali, Lakshmi, and Saraswati (Singh, Aruna, Balakrishna, April 1971) As per the legends Vaishno Devi was born as Vaishnavi on earth and was an ardent devotee of Lord Vishnu.

Mata used to meditate in a cave for days together. Once Bhairon Nath, a famous Hindu Tantric, saw the young Vaishno Devi at an agricultural fair and fell madly in love with her. Vaishno Devi fled into Trikuta hills to escape his bad intentions. Later she took the form of Mahakali and cut off his head with her sword in a cave (Journal of Religious Studies, Volume 14. Department of Religious Studies, Punjabi University. 1986. p. 56.). Another legend says Nine hundred years ago Vaishno Devi appeared as a young girl and commanded a Brahmin named Shri Dhar from the village Hansali to hold a feast (bhandara) for local people near the Bhumika stream (Pintchman Tracy). During the feast, Bhairon Nath demanded meat and liquor. But Vaishno Devi told him he would get only vegetarian food since this was a Brahmin feast. Bhairon Nath chased her. Mata ran away stopping at various places on the trail up the Trikuta mountain. These places are now known as Banganga, Charan Paduka, and Adi Kumari. The place where Mata rani remained for nine months was in a cave and finally at Bhavana, the cave that is now known as her home. There she took the form of Chamundi (a form of Kali) and beheaded Bhairon Nath. His body was thrown at the entrance of the cave whereas his head landed up in the mountain where Bhairon Nath temple is presently located. Bhairon Nath later felt sorry for his doing and asked the goddess for forgiveness. However, she said that whoever comes for her darshan also needs to get his darshan and then only their pilgrimage would be completed. Vaishno Devi later transformed into 3 small rocks (pindikas) and to date, she stays there. Shri Dhar began doing puja to the pindikas at the cave, and his people continue to do so to date (Pintchman 2001) The original abode of Vaishno Devi was Ardhaquari, a place about halfway between Katra town and the cave (Sajani Manohar 2001). According to legends when Bhairavnath ran after Vaishno devi to catch her she reached a cave in the hill and called up Hanuman and told him that she would do meditation in this cave for nine months. Till then he should not permit Bhairavnath to enter the cave.

Hanuman obeyed the mother's orders. Bhairavnath was kept outside this cave and today this holy cave is known as 'Ardhaquari' (Virodai, Yashodhara, 2021.) The Vaishno Devi temple is included in the Jammu and Kashmir Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Act No. XVI/1988 and also part of Article 26 of the Constitution of India. In the earlier days the management of the Shrine was with a group of traditional residents called Baridars as they collected their offerings as per their turn- bari. The board is now called as Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board which constitutes nine members of the board who are nominated by the Government of Jammu and Kashmir. The Governor of Jammu and Kashmir is the ex-officio Chairman of the Board. The temple is accessible by rail, road and air and has the perfect infrastructure and modern facilities and it is very well digitally connected

### Centres of Spiritual Importance

After getting down at Jammu railway station on way to Katra there exists a very ancient temple called Kol Kandoli temple which was made by Pandava. The temple was built here in one night. The Goddess is established in this temple in the shape of Pindi. Before starting the journey to the shrine one must take a blessing at this temple.

The temple is also known as the first glimpse of Kol Kandoli of Mata Vaishno Devi. The temple got its name from two words Kol-Kandoli. Kol means bowl and Kandoli means marbles. As per the old stories, Mata Vaishno appeared here at the age of 5 years as a little girl and stayed here up till the age of 12. One can find several ancient temples and sightseeing points on the 13-kilometre stretch between Katra and Bhawan.

- The first spiritual destination is Banganga which is one kilometre from Katra. One can take a holy bath in the river and also avail of Langar (free food) service.
- The second stop is Charanpaduka Temple which is 2.5 kilometres from Banganga. Legend says that the Goddess rested here before moving to Trikuta Hills. The place consists of footprints of the deity.
- Adkuwari is 3 kilometres from Charanpaduka which is halfway to the Vaishno Devi shrine. Before proceeding to the shrine devotees usually rest here. Adkuwari Temple and Gerbhjoon are very ancient caves. It is said that to protect herself from Bhairon Nath, Devi had hidden for nine months.
- Sanjichat 4 kilometres from Adkuwari. This is the highest point in the long-winding track, from where travellers can get a breathtaking aerial view of Katra, Udhampur, Reasi and Jammu.
- The last 2.5-kilometre stretch leads to Bhawan, the holy shrine of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi. After completing the darshan, devotees proceed to the Bhairon Nath temple, which is at a very short distance on the Bhawan-Sanjichat track. This track further leads to a dense forest where you find monkeys, wild animals, and birds. One can also visit the Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh Dham, located quite to Mata Vaishno Devi shrine. This Dham is always crowded with devotees during Kartik Poornima.
- After completing the darshan, devotees proceed to the Bhairon Nath temple, which is at a very short distance on the Bhawan-Sanjichat track. This track further leads to a dense forest where you will find monkeys, wild animals and birds.
- One can also visit the Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh Dham, located close to the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine. This Dham is always crowded with devotees during Kartik Poornima. This evening, devotees perform a special Deep-daan (donation of candles) ritual in front of Mata Vaishno Devi and Mata Anna Poorna (Priya Viswanathan).

### Literature Review

People travelling to places to find their self-existence can be termed 'Spiritual Tourists'. The travelling where tourists can achieve their self-personal transformation and know themselves can be termed 'Spiritual Tourism'. When an individual move from one border to another to seek the meaning of self and life, then that travelling can be turned out to be a significant exercise in the emergent market of tourism in terms of spirituality (Heelas & Woodhead, 2005). People tend to fulfil their urge for faith by visiting their desired spiritual places. Tourists take spiritual journeys to emotionally release stress due to a fast-paced life (Eade, 1992). In spiritual tourism, tourists visit religious places without any compulsion to experience faith and also grow spiritually (Haq and Bretherton, 2005). This shows that a deep motivation exists behind spiritual travel experienced from within. Such tourists cannot be termed Pilgrim tourists as the aim is not just to visit spiritual places but also to enjoy other activities. Moreover, a pilgrim tourist goes with a well-planned itinerary which schedules many more journeys one after the other (Ibid 1, 5-6). Numerous studies investigate spirituality in tourism regarding spiritual tourism

experiences (Roknodin Eftekhari et al., 2018). Some studies investigate other themes related to spirituality and the spiritual practices of employees and leaders (e.g. Milliman et al., 2018; Usman et al., 2021). Few studies explore the link between spirituality and sustainability (Mat Som, 2019). Tourism and spirituality have long enjoyed a close relationship. Pilgrimage is largely identified as one of the oldest types of tourism (Digence, 2006; Kaelber, 2006; Raj & Griffen, 2015). Religious tourism includes those participants who wish to travel for religious reasons (Rinschede, 1992). Religious tourism is an important market from the contemporary tourism market.

It is more than a sub-market within the bigger context of the spiritual dimension of tourism. The relationship between tourism, religion and spirituality is broader and more complex than it looks (Graburn, 1989; MacCannell, 1976). It has been noted that tourists can be motivated by religion, and people engage in spiritual journeys and visit religious places and events for religious reasons (Timothy & Olsen, 2006). Connectedness to the spiritual destination can be addressed or understood from various perspectives (Willson et al., 2013). One perspective suggests that spirituality connects to God or a higher being, whereas another perspective points to connectedness with the people.

In a psychological context, spirituality is concerned with connecting with the self. All these represent significant and diverse frameworks for exploring the spiritual dimension of tourism empirically, but a humanistic perspective offers the broadest and potentially most fruitful conceptual foundation for research into the spiritual dimension of tourism. It is pivotal to mention that though the phenomena exist right from the older times, the outcome of the experience will always be new, beneficial, uplifting and reviving.

This research identifies and showcases the spiritual migration of the tourist destination where the tourists can experience and express the “act of faith”. Previous works carried out by various researchers pertain to certain other places. The research theme in this chosen geographical location is yet to be explored, thus making the research a unique one and adding knowledge to the existing literature. Shri Mata Vaishno Devi has been able to build a brand as a religious pilgrimage destination which has stimulated economic activities.

It has won considerable recognition as an activity as it generates considerable income both for the state as well as the individuals associated with the industry. However, branding Mata Vaishno Devi as a spiritual destination will result in more potential economic returns and nonetheless result in an increase in tourist income to the world-famous temple.

### **Spiritual Awakening at Mata Vaishno Devi**

The journey to Mata Vaishno Devi is a Spiritual awakening. “Chalo bulawa aaya hai, mata ne bulaya hai” is a local saying that believes that unless she calls you to visit her, it is impossible to have her darshan. The bulawa to receive the darshan of the mother, and the rest will be taken care of by the mother herself. Therefore, high or low, wise or ignorant, men or women, await her Bulawayo. Many devotees have been said to have experienced this first-hand. The converse is also said to be true. Whenever the mother calls, even those who had not planned for the trip are bound to visit the mother at her shrine. Those who wish to visit her shrine make wishes in their hearts and pray to her for showering her love and giving darshan to them. Then, they bow to Mata and let her decide when will be the right time for them to visit her holy shrine. Pilgrims and ardent devotees of the Mother Goddess brave the

arduous 24-kilometre-long trek (to and fro) to reach the shrine that is always packed with irresistible divine vibrations. Arth, Dham, Moksha, and Kaam are the four pillars of human contentment and end at the Holy shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi.

The journey to the shrine is a purely spiritual experience where you will see devotees with health issues but still climbing up to reach the holy temple without being bothered about their pain and problems. They say when Mata calls nothing really matters. So, listen to the voice of Mata and follow a path of salvation and cry out loud, "Jai Mata di". You will feel an energy which is itself a spiritual experience. Many spiritual and religious Guru like Vivekanand ji and Guru Gobind Singh visited the shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi. This was the earliest record of a historical figure visiting the shrine of the Mother Goddess.

Vaishno Devi is believed to bestow strength to the weak, sight to the blind, wealth to the poor and bless childless couples with children. This mighty deity is kind enough to fulfil the desires of her devotees. It is believed that visiting Vaishno Devi during the Navaratri makes you one step closer to attaining heaven.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To explore the relationship between destination awareness on destination image from a spiritual tourist perspective.
2. To understand the role of spiritual tourism in developing Mata Vaishno Devi as a spiritual tourism destination.
3. To suggest the perspectives and strategies used to promote Mata Vaishno Devi as spiritual tourism in India.

### **Conceptual Framework**

#### ***Destination Awareness***

Awareness is the recalling, recognizing and knowledge of consumers regarding the Brand (Aaker 1996). Within the tourism subset, awareness is assumed as the familiarity a tourist has about a destination (Konecnik & Gartner 2000). Awareness denotes a destination name and character, and it stresses that an image of a destination does potentially exist in the mind of prospective destination visitors (Gartner 1993), thus restricting the chances set for travel to the destinations that a possible tourist is aware of (Gartner 1993; Goodall, 1993). Aaker (1992) has also said that Association ultimately defines the image-building and positioning of the brand.

While measuring the level of awareness for destination branding, the research is actually referred from the destination selection process (Boo et al., 2009; Goodall 1993; Kwun & Oh, 2004; Motamene & Shahrokhi, 1998). In other words, the measurement of Destination Awareness as the dimension of brand equity is inferred through previous visits a tourist had to a particular place (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007). The research evidence indicates that the awareness dimensions are an important part of brand equity (Gartner 1993; Lee is back, 2008; Pike 2007; Aaker 1992; Boo et al., 2009; Konecnik & Gartner 2007).

#### ***Destination Image***

Image measures tourist perception of destination Identity. One of the critical issues to be addressed by the marketer is how to build a brand in terms of creating a positive & powerful image of the destination.



Brand Image is measured in terms of how customer rate attributes to the brand association linked to consumer memory of the destination, which influences evaluation towards the brand (Pike, 2007; Kladou & Kehageas). Brands with a strong image create an impressive outlook of a destination in the mind of consumers (Keller 1993). This will further build up the reputation of a destination which will have a positive impact on buying behavior (Gordon Calantone and Di Beneditt,1993; McEnally and De Chernatony, 1999). Image is seen as subjective and objective, i.e., emotional and reasoned perceptions that the consumer attaches to a brand (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990; Keller, 2003). Echinus and Ritchie (1993) proposed a framework using a holistic, functional, unique, and psychological characteristic of destination image easement. Among the most frequently used attributes, Galarza et al. (2002) found that resident receptiveness, cultural attractiveness, and price-cost value are the most frequent attributes used in destination brand image measurement (Galarza et al. 2002). The image dimension is considered the most important and main dimension of tourism destination brand equity (Aaker,1991; Keller,1993; Koneinik & Gartner, 2007; Kim & Kim, 2005; Hankins, 2005; Wellesley & Young,1998).

#### ***Relationship between Destination Awareness and Destination Image***

Awareness is considered the primary dimension of brand equity (Im et al.,2012; Kim et al., 2009; Konecnik,2006). To appeal to consumers, a destination must first create tourist awareness (Milman & Pizam, 1995). Thus, destinations with a potential tourist interest can be included in the image formation aspect (Goodall, 1993). To increase the appeal to potential tourists, a destination must first achieve tourist awareness, and for a successful tourist destination, awareness and a positive image are the main ingredients (Milman and Pizam 1995). Awareness applies that an image exists in the mind of a potential tourist (Gartner, 1993). Awareness is linked with the selection of the destination process whereas image introduces the concept of familiarity. CBBETD as a multidimensional construct. Konecnik (2006) identifies the major influencing factors of awareness as a foundation to image, perceived quality, and brand loyalty.

Brand awareness, as the extent of brand recognition and recall of brands, adds to the aspect of brand familiarity. In fact, Destination Awareness is commonly considered a primary dimension of Customer-Based Brand Equity in travelling destinations (Konecnik (2006). Most have found a positive relationship between familiarity and Image (Baloglu, 2001). The relationship premise between Destination Awareness and Image has led the researcher to draw the first research assumption, that “Destination Awareness has a positive influence on Destination Image.” Hence the hypothesis: Destination Awareness has a positive influence on Destination image.

#### **Research Gap**

Ironically, there are very few studies in India that have investigated the relationship between Destination awareness and Destination Image of Tourism destination in the context of the Spiritual destination of Mata Vaishno Devi in India. Thus, the study in this area owing to the lack of a body of literature concerning this topic is very important because local, regional and governments are increasingly adopting a proactive approach to building strong brand equity for their spiritual tourism destinations to draw strategic competitive advantages. The selected study area of Mata Vaishno Devi due to its huge resource potential mainly for spiritual tourism needs to adopt sustainable tourism development wherein the Tourism industry can be provided with strategic input therein.

### Research Methodology

A clear distinctive research methodology gives a purposeful direction to the research study that results in determining the objectivity of the research. Keeping in view the nature of the research, the study was based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected from the tourists with the help of a specially designed questionnaire based on extensive literature measured on a 7-point Likert scale where 1 denotes strongly disagree and 7 denotes strongly agree. Quota-sampling technique was used for selecting the sample where proportionate sampling was drawn from the major tourist centres of the Mata Vaishno Devi and from the tourist visiting the locations where tourism destination authorities were established. In the preview of the research design, statistical tools like mean and standard deviation were used to study the descriptive statistics. Further, to test the hypothesis, multiple regression analysis was used to find cause and effect relationship between the dependent variable and independent variable.

### Analysis and Results

The sample constituted 700 tourists (respondents) visiting Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine. Table 1 shows that the majority of the respondents were tourists visiting Jammu from different parts of the country including Jammu. The majority of respondents belonged to the age group of 41-60 years (59%) and were graduates (62%). Maximum respondents were married (92%) and self-employed (56%) with a family income ranging from Rs. 40001-60000 (46%). The respondents travelled to Jammu by road (59%) and were free independent travellers (92%). The majority of the respondents stayed in 3-star hotels (71%). The reasons for the respondents to visit Jammu were due to religious aspects (63%) and the majority of them visited Bhaderwah (33%) amongst other places after visiting the shrine. The length of stay was a maximum of 4-6 days (46%).

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents**

| Variables            | No. of respondents | Percentage of respondents | Variables                  | No. of respondents | Percentage of respondents |
|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Gender</b>        |                    |                           | <b>Family Income</b>       |                    |                           |
| Male                 | 380                | 54.5                      | Less than 20000            | 11                 | 1.6                       |
| Female               | 317                | 45.5                      | 20001 - 40000              | 197                | 28.3                      |
| <b>Age</b>           |                    |                           | 400001-60000               | 296                | 42.5                      |
| Less than 20         | 33                 | 4.7                       | Above 60000                | 193                | 27.7                      |
| 21-40                | 249                | 35.7                      | <b>Accompanying Status</b> |                    |                           |
| 41-60                | 389                | 55.8                      | Free Independent traveler  | 580                | 83.2                      |
| Above 60             | 26                 | 3.7                       | Free group traveler        | 66                 | 9.5                       |
| <b>Qualification</b> |                    |                           | Package tour traveler      | 51                 | 7.3                       |
| Undergraduate        | 40                 | 5.7                       | <b>Mode of Journey</b>     |                    |                           |
| Graduate             | 382                | 54.8                      | Train                      | 153                | 22.0                      |
| Postgraduates        | 179                | 25.7                      | Air                        | 132                | 18.9                      |

|                       |     |      |                           |     |       |
|-----------------------|-----|------|---------------------------|-----|-------|
| Professional          | 77  | 11.0 | Road                      | 412 | 59.1  |
| Others                | 19  | 2.7  | <b>Accommodation Used</b> |     |       |
| <b>Travel Purpose</b> |     |      | Hotel                     | 424 | 61    |
| Business              | 13  | 1.9  | Resort                    | 12  | 1.72  |
| Adventure             | 17  | 2.4  | Lodges                    | 49  | 7.03  |
| Vacation              | 428 | 61.4 | Home Stay                 | 212 | 30.4  |
| Education             | 26  | 3.7  | <b>Category of Hotel</b>  |     |       |
| Pilgrimage            | 104 | 14.9 | 5 Star                    | 12  | 1.7   |
| Others                | 109 | 15.6 | 4 Star                    | 90  | 12.9  |
|                       |     |      | 3 Star                    | 272 | 39.0  |
|                       |     |      | 2 Star                    | 121 | 17.4  |
| <b>Marital Status</b> |     |      | Any Other                 | 202 | 29.0  |
| Single                | 48  | 6.9  | <b>Length of Stay</b>     |     |       |
| Married               | 584 | 83.8 | 1 – 3 Days                | 177 | 25.4  |
| Separated             | 34  | 4.9  | 4 – 6 Days                | 331 | 47.5  |
| Widowed               | 31  | 4.4  | 7 – 9 Days                | 125 | 17.9  |
| <b>Occupation</b>     |     |      | 10 – 13 Days              | 64  | 9.2   |
| Student               | 13  | 1.9  | <b>Places Visited</b>     |     |       |
| Self Employed         | 376 | 53.9 | Mata Vaishno Devi shrine  | 224 | 32.14 |
| Govt. Employee        | 219 | 31.4 | Patnitop                  | 169 | 24.2  |
| Corporate             | 50  | 7.2  | Rajouri                   | 191 | 27.4  |
| Others                | 39  | 5.6  | Mansar-Surinsar           | 92  | 13.2  |
|                       |     |      | Lakhanpur-Sarthal         | 06  | 0.9   |
|                       |     |      | Bhaderwah                 | 07  | 1.00  |
|                       |     |      | Kishtwar                  | 08  | 1.1   |

### Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 indicates that the mean score of both dependent and independent variables (Destination awareness and image) is higher which indicates that awareness has a significant relationship with the image of destination.

| Variable              | Mean   | Std. Deviation | N   |
|-----------------------|--------|----------------|-----|
| Destination Image     | 5.1728 | .51003         | 700 |
| Destination Awareness | 4.7762 | .61443         | 700 |

### Regression Analysis

The hypothesis in the study was to analyze that destination awareness has a positive influence on destination image (Table 3). Simple regression was used to test the hypothesis. To predict the goodness



of fit of the regression model, the correlation coefficient (R), coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) and F ratio were examined. The results imply that the correlation between investigated variables was statistically significant. It was confirmed that at the 5% level of significance, there is a positive correlation (.305) between awareness and image.

**Table 3: Results of Regression Analysis**

| Model | R                 | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R^2$ | Std. Error | F      | Sig. |
|-------|-------------------|-------|----------------|------------|--------|------|
| 1     | .305 <sup>a</sup> | .093  | .084           | .48822     | 10.041 | .002 |

Predictors: (Constant), Destination Awareness

The results show that  $R^2$  is 0.093, which implies that destination awareness has 9.3% influence on destination image (F value = 10.041,  $p < 0.05$ ). Thus, the regression model achieved a level of goodness of fit of about 17% as measured by  $R^2$  and F ratio. The F value confirmed that there exists a regression model between awareness and image at the 5% level of significance. The  $R^2$  of this model is ( $R^2 = 0.84$ ) and this value is reasonable for Likert Scale data.

**Table 4: Regression Coefficients of Regression Analysis**

| Model                 | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | T      | Sig. |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
|                       | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |        |      |
| 1 (Constant)          | 3.964                       | .385       |                           | 10.309 | .000 |
| Destination Awareness | .253                        | .080       | .305                      | 3.169  | .002 |

Dependent Variable: Destination Image

The standardized beta value of destination awareness is .305 ( $p < .05$ ) which means destination awareness has a positive impact on destination image (Table 4). The results confirmed that there is a positive relationship between destination awareness and destination image. Thus, creating awareness about the spiritual aspect of Mata Vaishno Devi will result in forming a different image of the shrine in the mind of a prospective tourist.

### Strategies for developing Mata Vaishno Devi as a Spiritual Destination

The destination development promotional strategies are as follows:

- To create Mata Vaishno Devi spiritual centres with relevant spiritual values and link them with international institutes world wide to promote the shrine as an important spiritual tourist destination.
- To build awareness of spiritual places of relevance at Mata Vaishno Devi through a mass media campaign online, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. This will help in targeting both national and international tourists.
- To link the Spiritual centres to the surrounding destinations like Jammu, Udhampur, Patni top, Kud, Chenani etc., around the pilgrimage sites to attract tourists.
- High-quality promotional materials such as brochures, posters, manuals, Websites etc., to be developed to highlight the spiritual aspect of the destination.

- Add-on services to be provided along with spiritual tourism offers like Ayurveda treatment, Spiritual workshops, Yoga, and the Traditional system of Indian medicine and life sciences.
- The Spiritual centres will give the tourist an opportunity to explore new places with new dimensions for enhancing life within the spiritual destination.
- Also promoting spiritual products like aggarbattis, havan-samgri, handmade idols, diya, local artisans' handicrafts items etc., to increase their value and essence among the potential tourists.
- Sustainability guidelines for Spiritual Tourism Development at Mata Vaishno Devi like Eco friendly, go green, sattvic bhajan, maintain hygiene, waste management etc.
- Integration of Spiritual Tourism with other cultural tourism by regularly organizing festivals, workshops, interactions and seminars.
- Modification of the bottlenecks to be removed to create an influx of tourists in the spiritual destination.
- Participation and involvement of the local communities with the centres to increase their love and emotional connectivity with their area.

### Limitations and Future Research

The overall purpose of this paper was to highlight the dynamic nature of the spiritual dimension of tourism. Similarly, differing interpretations of spirituality in general and connectedness, in particular, suggest that the spiritual dimension of tourism is more complex than the fundamental argument that it represents the quest for meaning in contemporary, inauthentic society. In particular, this paper has revealed that the relationship between creating awareness regarding Mata Vaishno Devi as a spiritual destination which eventually will create an image of the shrine as the spiritual destination, will open different disciplinary analyses. The role of the tourism sector in creating Mata Vaishno Devi as a Spiritual tourism destination's impact upon understanding and practices in religion and spirituality cannot be overlooked, whilst the significance of place to the tourism-spirituality relationship cannot be underestimated.

### Conclusion

Spirituality is one of the main attractions for tourists in India, especially foreign tourists. This study has highlighted a basic understanding of spiritual tourism and its connectivity with the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine. More important is that some tourists do not seek luxury but difficult journeys to achieve the divine goal. Over the last many years, it has been observed that tourists, nationally and internationally, has been migrated from one part of the country to another. But in the 21st Century, it has also been observed that the meaning of tourism must change as it was previously associated with religious activities. Nowadays, it is connected with self-exploration and satisfaction with life. Thus, this study has suggested that Mata Vaishno Devi and various places around it be developed as spiritual centres. The paper has also highlighted various strategies for the promotion of the Centre and suggested various methods to maintain the sustainability of the destination to attract Spiritual tourists. If these strategies and suggestions are implemented in the country, then the Tourism Industry can do niche marketing by targeting spiritual tourists globally. The shrine was always enriched with its spiritual values and ethos, so the paradigm evolution of tourism is always an opportunity for Jammu to attract tourists worldwide to

explore the self and enrich their life by experiencing spirituality in the spiritual land. The finding reveals that Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine has a huge potential to be projected as a spiritual destination for the concept and applications from a tourist perspective.

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