

A study of one of the Spiritual Economic Olympics of India: Case Study of Prayagraj (2025) and the forthcoming Nashik Kumbh Mela (2027)

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ABSTRACT

The Kumbh Mela is one of the largest spiritual gatherings in the world, yet there seems to be very little research on the economic impact of the same. This research paper, therefore, is going to analyse the economic impact of the event with emphasis on the linkage impact in terms of employment, tourism, travel, transport, home stays, hotels, and various other residential places, and the effects of the Kumbh Mela on the GDP of the city and the state. It is going to compare the actual economic impact of the Prayagraj 2025 Maha Kumbh with the Nashik Kumbh Mela 2027 projected impact. This is going to be a mixed methods study using secondary data that involves projections using a scaling method that uses the Prayagraj Kumbh Mela as a base for predicting the impact. A comparative analysis would be attempted between 2025 and 2027 to understand the gains of the spiritual olympics.

Key Words: Kumbh Mela, religious tourism, spiritual economy, tourism multiplier, Prayagraj Maha Kumbh 2025, Nashik Simhastha 2027, infrastructure cost-benefit analysis

Research Question: This paper will analyse the linkage impact on one of the most important spiritual events namely the Nashik Kumbh Mela and contrast it with the one in Prayagraj. Emphasis would be on the linkage impact in terms of employment, tourism, travel, transport, home stays, hotels, and various other residential places. What is the effect of the above on the GDP of the city and also the state? Is the cost involved in the building of infrastructure covered by the revenue earned during the mela? A comparative analysis would be attempted between 2025 and 2027 to understand the gains of the spiritual olympics.

Note: All monetary values in this paper are reported in United States dollars. Indian rupee figures from the underlying sources have been converted at US\$1 = ₹96, the rate prevailing in September 2026, and rounded.

1. Introduction

The Kumbh Mela is known to be one of the most sacred gatherings for Hindus. The founding myth of which, as per the Purana (collection of myths and legends), talks about the fight between gods and demons over the pot of Amrit (kumbh), the elixir of immortality, which is produced by the joint churning of the Milky Ocean. To prevent the demons (asuras) from obtaining the elixir, the story recounts the goddess Mohini carrying the elixir to heaven. As she does so, drops of the elixir fall down to four earthly sites (presently known as Nashik, Prayagraj, Haridwar and Ujjain). At the climactic moment of each mela, it is believed that the rivers at those holy sites transform into vessels of that primordial nectar of immortality that conveys benefits to pilgrims. During the course of the Kumbh Mela there are certain dates calculated years in advance by the Vedic astrologers, during which the holy '*Amrit Snan*' takes place, it is said that during these dates the rivers spiritually transform back into that divine nectar. In Nashik resides the river Godavari, in Haridwar, the river Ganga; in Ujjain, river Shipra and in Prayagraj the '*Triveni Sangam*', where Ganga, Yamuna and the Mythical Saraswati meet. Primarily, a Kumbh Mela rotates between the four cities every three years, a full (Purna Kumbh) Kumbh takes place at the same location every 12 years. Ardh Kumbh (half Kumbh) takes place every six years, majorly rotating between Prayagraj and Haridwar and the Maha Kumbh takes place every 144 years, held only in Prayagraj (Nangia, n.d.). However, historians and fact-checkers have questioned the official "once in 144 years" framing of the 2025 Maha Kumbh (Alt News, 2025). The Kumbh Mela is the largest social gathering in the world (Nangia, n.d.), with about 660 million visits over a 45-day period at the 2025 Prayagraj Maha Kumbh, as per the Uttar Pradesh government figures (DD News, 2025; Reuters, 2025).

With the exception of the recent Maha Kumbh, there is not extensive research done on the economic impact of this gathering over a city. With minimal research conducted on the following topic, it is essential to analyse the economic impact on the city and estimate the extent of the economic ripples sent throughout the city in the long term and the short term, which is what the research paper focuses on.

2. Background

The Kumbh Mela has been studied as one of the largest and oldest social gatherings in the world. It has been researched through multiple perspectives, ranging across economic, social, religious, tourism, media representation, and much more (Sharma & Kumar, 2025). The Nashik Simhashta Kumbh Mela occurs when both Jupiter and the Sun are in Leo, or when Jupiter is in Leo and the Sun and Moon are in Cancer (District Administration Nashik, n.d.), with the word "Simhashta" referring to the specific occurrence of the Kumbh Mela when the planet Jupiter enters the zodiac sign of Leo (Anand, 2025b). It is said that taking a holy bath during the duration of the Kumbh

Mela is said to wash away a lifetime of sins. This is because, when Jupiter is inside Leo, a powerful cosmic energy is created, energy which, according to the scriptures, charges the water of the Godavari River, turning it into Amrit, the nectar of immortality (NashikKumbhMela.org, n.d.). The 2026–2028 Simhastha Kumbh Mela in Nashik is going to take place over an unusually long period of 21 months; this is because Earth and Jupiter are moving around the sun at different speeds, which, sometimes, would make Jupiter appear as if it is moved out of the zodiac sign, which in turn lead to “long gap periods” in which the holy water loses its special energy and thus also creates long gaps in between the “valid” bathing periods. This gap is divided into three parts because of Jupiter’s irregular motion, thus named as “The Trikhanda Yog” (NashikKumbhMela.org, n.d.).

An interesting aspect of the Kumbh Mela is that two melas can overlap over one another due to the celestial bodies simultaneously aligning according to the requirement of two cities. For example, Nashik Kumbh Mela 2027 is going to take place from October 31, 2026 to July 24, 2028 (NashikKumbhMela.co.in, 2025) and the Ujjain Simhastha Kumbh 2028 is going to take place from March 27 to May 27, 2028, with principal royal baths on April 9 and May 8, 2028 (Anand, 2025a, 2025b).

According to popular accounts, there is some earlier evidence of the mela that includes certain archaeological findings like coins and inscriptions from the 4th–6th century CE (Gupta period) that depict ritual river bathing (Subramanian, 2024). Even early British records from 1765 contained detailed information about the “Magh Mela” at Prayagraj (Maclean, 2008). Following the Treaty of Allahabad in 1765, and the British East India Company’s formal acquisition of the area in 1801, British officials saw the huge pilgrimage as an opportunity to collect a heavy “pilgrim tax” on bathers (Maclean, 2008; Taxscan, 2025); attendance grew substantially only after the tax was abolished in 1838–1840 (Maclean, 2008). The pilgrim tax clearly represents the weight of the *economic significance* of the mela and how its value dates back to earlier centuries. The Kumbh Mela contributes to almost every element of the economy, ranging from GDP and employment of the city to the transport and tourism, all of which inevitably have a monumental impact on the economy.

2.1 Analysis of Ardh Kumbh Mela to the Purna Kumbh Mela

The Ardh Kumbh Mela which literally stands for “Half Kumbh Mela” is the intermediate point between the Purna Kumbh Mela which only takes place in the following locations: Prayagraj and Haridwar. The Ardh Kumbh is when Jupiter is in the opposite sign compared to where it is during the Purna (full) Kumbh and the reason behind the Ardh Kumbh only taking place in Prayagraj and Haridwar is because the two locations have planetary alignments that occur twice within a 12 year cycle (The Times of India, 2019) and are ‘assigned’ as locations to conduct the

Ardh Kumbh in the traditional/astrological context (District Administration Nashik, n.d.) (note to consider this as traditional astrological explanation which may be different from the astronomical/scientific explanation).

3. Research Gap and Methodology

The paper would attempt to address the linkages impact that takes place in a city that hosts the Kumbh Mela. A special emphasis would be on the upcoming Nashik Kumbh Mela of 2027 and the effect that it has on major macroeconomic indicators of the state like GDP, employment, tourism, homestays, etc. The forecasted results would be contrasted with the Prayagraj Kumbh Mela that took place in 2025. This would help in analysing the impact of religious tourism in a country like India which is steeped in religious history.

The methodology adopted would be the mixed method type where both quantitative and qualitative analysis would simultaneously be used to infer the linkage impact of this tourism multiplier. All data collected would be primarily from authentic secondary sources.

4. Analysis of the Prayagraj Maha Kumbh Mela 2025

The Prayagraj Kumbh Mela 2025 generated billions of dollars of revenue due to tourism, with the Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee Research Foundation (SPMRF) estimating tourism revenue alone at over US\$15.6 billion (Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee Research Foundation, 2025) and total economic activity estimated at US\$20.8–31.3 billion (Confederation of All India Traders, 2025; ETV Bharat, 2025; The Economic Times, 2025). The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) projected total trade of US\$20.8 billion from the mela, assuming roughly 400 million visitors spending an average of US\$52 each. Category-wise, CAIT estimated US\$4.17 billion from accommodation and tourism, US\$2.08 billion each from food & beverages and from religious items & offerings, US\$1.04 billion each from transportation & logistics, tourism services, and entertainment & media, US\$521 million from handicrafts and souvenirs, US\$313 million from healthcare services, and US\$104 million from IT and digital services, with the remainder spread across other sectors. Post-event, CAIT revised its estimate of total business generated to approximately US\$31.3 billion (Confederation of All India Traders, 2025).

This immense revenue collection also stems from the inelasticity of demand for the mela itself; individuals go above and beyond to attend the mela and also consume the elements that branch out from the same. For example, for the people who were unable to attend the mela, various digital platforms ran virtual pujas and pilgrimage services during the Kumbh Mela and reported hundreds of thousands of people booking the same (Moneycontrol, 2025). Specifically, a digital platform named “Vama” reported an active transacting user base of approximately 250,000 and

large Kumbh-period activity. Vama reported an approximate 50% increase in user transactions and a 40% surge in traffic during the Kumbh Mela period (Moneycontrol, 2025).

The operation of such an event also requires a substantial amount of people/workers to manage the same. The Kumbh Mela 2025 that took place in Prayagraj was estimated to create around 1.2 million temporary jobs across various sectors (ETCFO, 2025; Invest UP, 2025).

**Table 1. Projected Revenue from the Prayagraj Kumbh Mela 2025 as per CAIT
(Confederation of All India Traders)**

Sector	Revenue (US\$ million)
Accommodation and tourism	4,167*
Food and beverages	2,083*
Religious items and offerings	2,083*
Transportation and logistics	1,042*
Tourism services	1,042*
Entertainment and media	1,042*
Handicrafts and souvenirs	521*
Healthcare services	313*
IT and digital services	104*
Other, non-itemised sectors (residual)	8,438**
Total projected trade	20,833*
Total business generated (revised)	~31,250***

* Confederation of All India Traders (2025), pre-event projection (Jan 2025); originally reported as ₹2 lakh crore in total.

** Author's calculation from Confederation of All India Traders (2025) data (residual: CAIT's total minus the itemised categories above).

*** ETV Bharat (2025), reporting CAIT's post-event revised estimate.

Status: all figures are Projected (pre-event) except the residual (**, Derived) and the revised total (***, Post-event estimate). Converted at US\$1 = ₹96.

4.1 Economic Impact of Prayagraj Kumbh Mela 2025

The economic impact of the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 Prayagraj was enormous, the linkage effect can be explained through the Keynesian multiplier and the Tourism Multiplier. The

Keynesian multiplier explains how an initial investment can lead to an overall increase in the national GDP and income levels which is exactly what the Maha Kumbh did for India. The Kumbh Mela essentially led to massive infrastructural developments from the building of new flyovers to upgradation of airport terminals, which in turn made travel easier thus leading to an exponential amount of attendees for the mela (MedCIndia, 2025). The relatively large number of attendees also give startups, spiritual startups or FMCGs (Fast-Moving Consumer Goods) an opportunity to advertise their product and use the mela as a path which they marketed their product. Even digital startups and transaction apps benefited from the mela which allowed them to expand the nation's digital economy (Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee Research Foundation, 2025). Along with the Keynesian Multiplier, the impact of the Kumbh Mela can also be analysed through the *tourism multiplier*. This is an economic concept that measures the output generated following an initial investment. The tourism multiplier effect of the Prayagraj Maha Kumbh was stupendous: Dun & Bradstreet India's Kumbhonomics 2025 report estimates total output of US\$29.2 billion (direct US\$9.4 billion + indirect US\$8.3 billion + induced US\$11.5 billion), implying roughly US\$3 of total economic output for every US\$1 of direct spending ($29.2 \div 9.4 \approx 3.1$) (Dun & Bradstreet India, 2025).

Table 2. The table below shows the UP Government's actual post event breakdown of business generated of the Prayagraj Maha Kumbh Mela (2025)

Sector	Revenue (US\$ million)
Transportation	15,625*
Hotel industry	4,167*
Food and daily essentials	3,438*
Religious offerings	2,083*
Donations	69*
Toll tax	31*
Other revenue	6,875*
Total business generated	~32,292*

* Uttar Pradesh Government (Chief Minister's statement, UP Legislative Assembly, 5 March 2025) (Press Trust of India, 2025b). Converted at US\$1 = ₹96.

Status: all figures are Post-event claims.

Table 3. Passenger Analytics Air Traffic

Metric	Normal (pre-Kumbh)	During Kumbh Mela 2025
Passenger traffic		
Daily passengers (avg, Jan 13–Feb 16)	<1,000/day (~20 flights)***	8,929/day (~9× surge)**
Single-day passenger record	<1,000***	24,512 (Feb 21, 2025) (reported single day peak)*, ***
Previous single-day record (Feb 16)	—	20,297 passengers, 120 flights**
Total passengers (46 Kumbh Mela days)	—	559,178*
Passengers in final 10 days (Feb 17–26)	—	238,000*
First 36 days passenger count	—	320,000*
Total passengers FY 2024–25	Previously below 1 million	1 million+ (first ever); briefly ranked among top 20 busiest Indian airports during the Kumbh Mela months*

* AAI, as reported in The Times of India (2025).

** Uttar Pradesh Newz (2025).

*** Indian Eagle (2025).

Table 4. Kumbh Mela Informal Economy — Data Table

Category	Data point	Source	Status / Note
Boatmen — scale	4,500+ boats operating round-the-clock; 13,000+ boatmen (at least 3 per boat); over 15 million devotees took boat trips*	UP government statement; Press Trust of India (2025a)	Official
Boatmen earnings	Average US\$8,300–9,400 per boatman over the 45 days*	UP government statement; Press Trust of India (2025a)	Official claim

Category	Data point	Source	Status / Note
Boatmen — standout case	Family of Pintu Mahara: 130 boats, US\$3.13 million in 45 days (~US\$24,000 per boat)**	CM Yogi Adityanath, UP Assembly; Press Trust of India (2025b)	Contested by opposition; cited as government claim
Street vendors — earnings	Tea stalls US\$208–313/day; puri sellers ~US\$16/day; camel rides ~US\$31/day; water-bottle vendors ~US\$26/day	Dun & Bradstreet India (2025)	Report anecdotes
Migrant vendors	Small tea sellers earning US\$42–52/day at peak; vendors migrated from Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha	The Migration Story (2025)	Field reporting
Sanitation workers	15,000 sanitation workers + 2,500 Ganga Seva Doots (Guinness-recorded synchronized clean-up)	Press Information Bureau (2025)	Official (PIB releases vary 10,200–22,000; 15,000 is the Guinness-documented figure)
Sanitation wages & welfare	US\$167/month for workers below minimum wage + US\$104 bonus; boatmen given US\$5,200 security cover + US\$5,200 health cover	All India Radio News (2025b)	Official
Security deployment	50,000+ personnel incl. 14,000 home guards; 3,800 water police	Press Information Bureau (2025)	Official
Gig/temporary jobs (projection)	~1.2 million gig & temporary jobs benefiting 800,000+ workers (tourism/hospitality ~450,000; transport ~300,000; IT ~200,000; healthcare ~150,000; retail ~100,000)	NLB Services (staffing firm), in Business Standard (2025b)	Industry projection, not a government count

Category	Data point	Source	Status / Note
Total employment (think-tank estimate)	600,000+ temporary and permanent jobs; ~45,000 families employed in tents, sanitation, logistics	Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee Research Foundation (2025)	Think-tank estimate
Handicrafts / ODOP	Projected turnover up to US\$3.65 million (vs US\$0.45 million in 2019); 75 GI products showcased	Organiser (2025); Press Trust of India (2025c)	Pre-event projection — no post-event actual published
Post-event macro effect	Prayagraj unemployment 7.2% → 6.5% one year after (2019 Kumbh Mela); registered businesses +15%	Verma (n.d.), India Think Council working paper	Working paper (2019 event, used as precedent)
Research gap	Informal workers (vendors, artisans, casual labourers) understudied; ~90% of event jobs temporary	Maurya & Gupta (2025), GISRRJ peer-reviewed journal	Peer-reviewed

*UP government statement, as reported by Press Trust of India (2025a).

**CM Yogi Adityanath, UP Legislative Assembly, 5 March 2025, as reported by Press Trust of India (2025b).

4.2 Legacy effects

Prayagraj Maha Kumbh created a strong short-term multiplier, but as per the sources, the impact did not persist for more than a year after the event except for some visible hospitality benefits. The city clearly seems to have experienced a sugar rush rather than lasting long-term growth.

Hotels: The demand for hotels remained high, even after the main bathing dates. The government stated that hotels, lodge and cottage demand were still extremely high as on February 18, 2025. Local hoteliers reported bookings at nearly full capacity through February 2025 (Jansatta, 2025).

Airport traffic: The Prayagraj airport managed about 559,000 passengers in 46 days of the event, which depicted a fairly high short-term spike in the traffic (The Times of India, 2025).

Business Activity: Local hotel and restaurant operators had reportedly recorded a 5% to 10% increase in their profits during the course of the event, suggesting actual commercial gains rather than just crowd movement (The Hans India, 2025).

5. Projected Growth - Nashik Kumbh Mela 2027

Since the Nashik Simhastha lies ahead, its economic impact must be projected rather than measured, and this paper does so through a transparent *per-visit scaling method* anchored in the Prayagraj experience. The 2025 Maha Kumbh recorded 663 million visits along with direct revenue of US\$15.6 billion, implying the average spending to be of roughly US\$23.6 per visit. Because Nashik's mela unfolds over an unusually long 21-month window under the Trikhanda Yog — dispersing footfall across three separated bathing periods rather than concentrating it into 45 days — a downward adjustment of 20% is applied, yielding a benchmark of about US\$18.9 per visit. This benchmark is then applied to three footfall scenarios drawn from official and independent projections: a conservative below-par 50 million visits, an expected case of 85 million, and an optimistic 120 million, consistent with the Maharashtra government's expectation of four to five times the 2015 attendance (Press Trust of India, 2025d). The resulting projections of revenue, sectoral demand, and employment are presented below, with every assumption documented so that the estimates can be tested against actuals once the mela concludes.

Exhibit 1 — Nashik Baseline (Table 5)

How these figures were arrived - Since no single official document lays out Nashik's economic baseline for 2027, this table collects the data from different sources. The district GDDP range is the author's own working estimate built from Maharashtra's Directorate of Economics & Statistics data, because no public report gives one clean figure. Most reports and government statements put the 2015 attendance to be about 25–30 million, though records from the time suggest the actual turnout may have been closer to 10 million in Nashik and another 2.5–3 million in Trimbakeshwar. The author kept the higher figure since that is the base the Maharashtra government itself used when it set its “4–5 times 2015” target for 2027. For infrastructure, the benchmark used throughout is US\$3.62 billion (₹34,732 crore), the figure for the development plan that the Chief Minister directed be completed on schedule at the review meeting of 7 August 2026. It covers the Nashik Ring Road, Sadhu Gram, railway station upgrades, parking, 4,500 special state transport buses, sanitation, disaster management and the Digital Kumbh programme. It supersedes two earlier approved totals — ₹25,055 crore in October 2025 and ₹22,181 crore in March 2026 — and that escalation across three announcements in under a year is itself relevant to the cost-recovery question.

Table 5. Nashik district economic baseline and Kumbh Mela 2027 parameters

Parameter	Value	Source
Nashik district GDDP (indicative range)	US\$15.9–24.1 billion	Directorate of Economics and Statistics (2024)
2015 Simhastha attendance	~25–30 million visitors	Press Trust of India (2025d); Punekar News (2026)
Official 2027 footfall expectation	4–5× the 2015 level (~100–125 million); guides (as per tourism guide websites) cite 150 million+	Press Trust of India (2025d); Adhvanta India (2026) Tourism websites: NashikTourism.com (n.d.); KumbhMela.org.in (n.d.)
Approved infrastructure outlay (current)	US\$3.62 billion (₹34,732 crore development plan, August 2026)	Marksman Daily (2026)
Earlier approved totals (escalation)	US\$2.61 billion (₹25,055 crore, Oct 2025), incl. ring road (US\$793 million) and airport expansion; US\$2.31 billion (₹22,181 crore, Mar 2026)	NashikKumbhMela.co.in (2026); English Bombay Samachar (2026), reporting Hindustan Times
Event window	Oct 31, 2026 – Jul 24, 2028 (~21 months; peak Jul–Sep 2027)	NashikKumbhMela.co.in (2025); Punekar News (2026)
Independent economic-activity estimate	Up to US\$2.81 billion total (direct + indirect + induced)	deAsra Foundation, in Punekar News (2026)

Note. US\$3.62 billion (₹34,732 crore) is used as the infrastructure benchmark throughout, being the most recent plan figure, which the Chief Minister directed be completed on schedule at the review of 7 August 2026. The two earlier approved totals are retained to show the escalation.

About this exhibit: Establishes every input the Nashik projections depend on: the district's economic size, the 2015 attendance anchor, official footfall expectations, the approved infrastructure outlay, the 21-month event window, and the independent data estimate used later as a validation check.

Exhibit 2 — Nashik 2027 Scenario Projections (Table 6)

Table 6. Reconciled projected revenue and employment scenarios for Nashik Kumbh Mela 2027

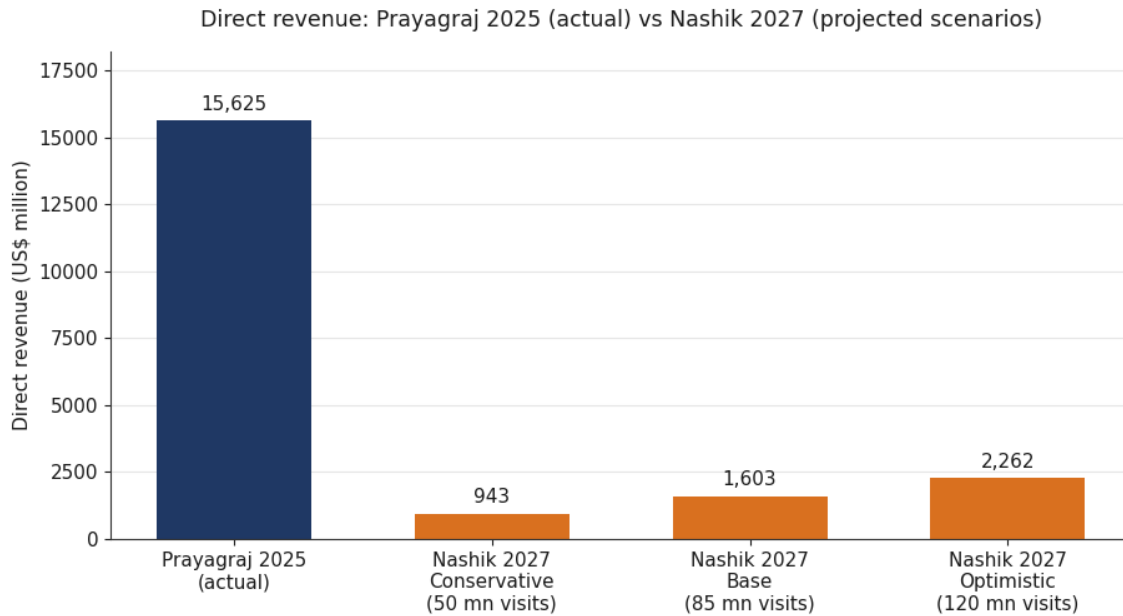
Metric	Conservative	Base (Expected)	Optimistic
Footfall (million visits)	50	85	120
Revenue per visit (US\$) ²	18.9	18.9	18.9
Projected direct revenue (US\$ million)	943	1,603	2,262
Transport share @48% (US\$ million)	452	769	1,086
Hotel/accommodation share @13% (US\$ million)	123	208	294
Food & daily essentials share @11% (US\$ million)	104	176	249
Temporary event-duration jobs ³	~90,000	~154,000	~217,000
Direct revenue as % of district GDDP (low end)	~5.9%	~10.1%	~14.2%

Note. Author's calculations. Dividing the US\$15.6 billion tourism revenue generated in Prayagraj 2025 by 663 million visits gives us a rough estimate of US\$23.6 per visit. However, the Nashik Kumbh Mela is a very different event because it takes place across 21 months in three separate bathing windows instead of just 45 days so it is assumed that the visitors are likely to spend less per trip. To account for this, the figure has been reduced by 20% arriving at US\$18.9 per visit. This figure is then applied to three footfall scenarios, a conservative 50 million and an expected 85 million and then an optimistic 120 million, which is also reflected by the government's own 4–5× target. The percentage sector splits (transport 48%, hotels 13%, food and daily essentials 11%) are derived from the Uttar Pradesh government post event breakdown of Prayagraj 2025 business in Table 2 (US\$15,625, US\$4,167 and US\$3,438 million of ~US\$32,292 million).

About this exhibit: The core new contribution of the paper: three footfall scenarios converted into revenue, sector demand (transport, accommodation, F&B — matching outline items 5.1.3 and 5.1.4), and employment (5.1.1), using a fully documented per-visit method. Every number is reproducible from the footnotes.

Exhibit 3 — Master Comparison (Table 7 + Figure 1)

Figure 1. Direct revenue — Prayagraj 2025 (actual) vs Nashik 2027 (projected scenarios)



Source: Author's chart. Prayagraj from Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee Research Foundation (2025); Nashik scenarios from Table 6.

Table 7. Master comparison — Prayagraj 2025 (actual) vs Nashik 2027 (projected, base scenario)

Dimension	Prayagraj 2025 (actual)	Nashik 2027 (base projection)
Event type	Maha Kumbh (144-year)	Simhastha Purna Kumbh (12-year)
Duration	45 days (compressed)	~21 months, 3 bathing windows (Trikhanda Yog)
Footfall	663 million visits	85 million visits (range 50–120)
Direct revenue	US\$15.6 billion (up to US\$31.3 billion total activity)	US\$1.60 billion (range US\$0.94–2.26 billion)
Revenue per visit	US\$23.6	US\$18.9 (assumed, –20%)
Infrastructure outlay	US\$781 million (UP govt Kumbh Mela budget) (Business Standard, 2025a; Hindustan Times, 2025)	US\$3.62 billion current plan, escalated from US\$2.31 billion approved in March 2026 (Marksmen Daily, 2026; English Bombay Samachar, 2026)

Dimension	Prayagraj 2025 (actual)	Nashik 2027 (base projection)
Infra outlay as % of direct revenue	~5%	~226% (base scenario)
Temporary employment	1.2 million gig/temporary (headline); 120,000–170,000 event-site	~150,000 (range 90,000–220,000)
Tourism multiplier	~US\$3.1 per US\$1 (implied by Dun & Bradstreet India, 2025)	>2× per deAsra (formal knowledge partner to the government body running the Kumbh Mela) (Punekar News, 2026)

Note. Author's compilation from paper Sections 4–5 and cited sources. Nashik figures are projections carrying the assumptions in Table 6 notes.

About this exhibit: The side-by-side analysis answers the research question. Even considering optimistic estimates, Nashik generates roughly one-seventh of Prayagraj's direct revenue — a Simhastha does not command a Maha Kumbh's footfall that occurs once-in-144-years — but its revenue is earned over 21 months against a proportionally far larger infrastructure commitment.

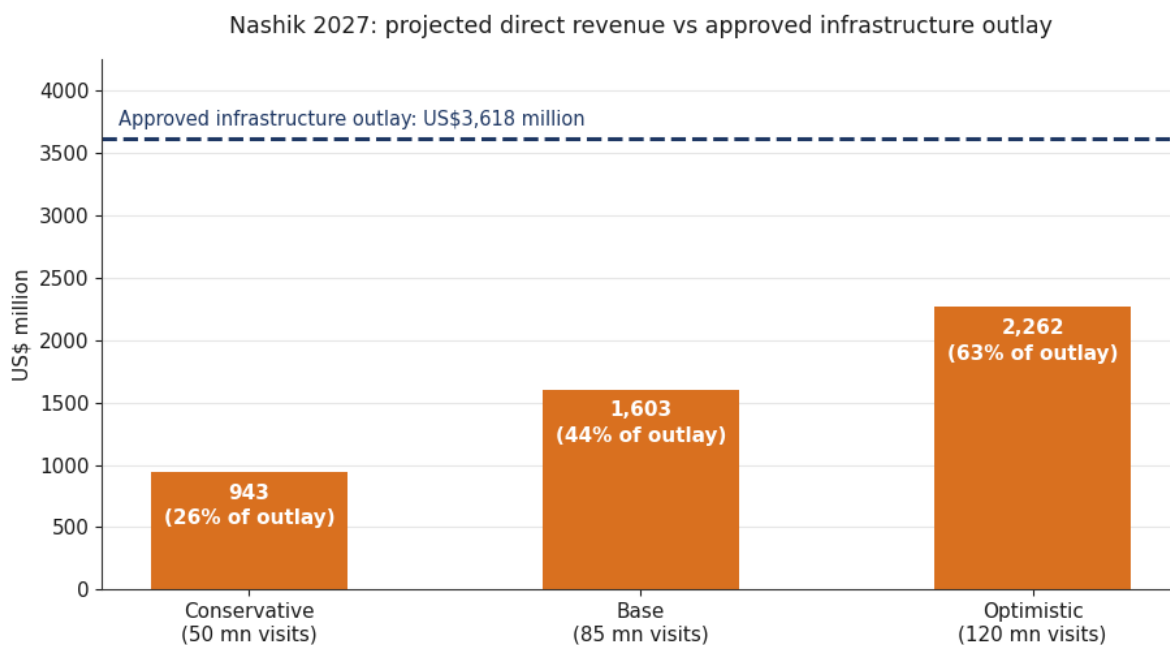
Exhibit 4 — Does Revenue Cover Infrastructure? (Table 8 + Figure 2)

Table 8. Projected Nashik 2027 direct revenue vs current infrastructure outlay (US\$3.62 billion)

Scenario	Direct revenue (US\$ million)	Coverage of outlay (% of the US\$3.62 billion infrastructure spend recouped by direct revenue alone)	With 2× multiplier applied ¹
Conservative (50 million visits)	943	26%	~52% of outlay
Base (85 million visits)	1,603	44%	~89% of outlay
Optimistic (120 million visits)	2,262	63%	~125% of outlay

Note. Author's calculations from Table 6. ¹ Applies the conservative end of the deAsra finding that each dollar of direct spending generates more than two dollars of total activity (Punekar News, 2026).

Figure 2. Nashik 2027 projected direct revenue vs approved infrastructure outlay.



Source: Author's chart, from Table 8. Outlay per Marksmen Daily (2026).

The above exhibit directly answers the core question of whether the infrastructure cost is covered by the revenue earned. Measured against the current US\$3.62 billion plan, direct revenue does not cover the outlay in any scenario, reaching only 63% even at an optimistic 120 million visits. Applying the 2× multiplier ($k=2$), the optimistic case clears the outlay at 125% while the base case still falls short at 89%. This conclusion is sensitive to the budget figure used: against the US\$2.31 billion approved in March 2026 the optimistic case had come close to breaking even on direct revenue alone (98%), so the escalation announced in August 2026 is what moves the analysis from near cost recovery to a clear shortfall.

7. The Role of Spiritual Economics in India

Spiritual economics stands as a major aspect of the Indian economy. People from all around the world visit the country, not only for the Kumbh Mela but for other mass festivals too, such as the Durga Puja in West Bengal, valuing the creative industries around Durga Puja at US\$4.53 billion (as valued by the study, at then-prevailing exchange rates), which also accounts for 2.58% of the state's GDP (British Council, 2021); the Kanwar Yatra, occurring in the holy month of Shravan, which in 2025 saw over 45 million Shiva devotees collect holy water from the river Ganges at Haridwar (All India Radio News, 2025a); or the Jagannath Puri Yatra, a nine day journey where

millions compete to get hold of thick coir ropes to pull the massive wooden chariots from the Shree Jagannath Temple to the Shree Gundicha Temple (Ministry of Tourism, n.d.). India is home to multiple mass festivals celebrating the birth, arrival and the journeys of various spiritual deities, festivals which generate massive economic value in the nation every year. Spiritual tourism accounts for nearly 60% of India's domestic tourism (KPMG in India & PHDCCI, 2024) and India's spiritual tourism sector is projected to grow at roughly 10–18% annually depending on methodology (Future Market Insights, 2026; Grand View Research, n.d.), with CBRE South Asia estimating a 16.2% CAGR (Al Jazeera, 2024; CBRE South Asia, 2024) and IBEF anticipating the sector to reach US\$59 billion by 2028 (India Brand Equity Foundation, 2024).

8. Detrimental impact of the event

In the case of Prayagraj, while the mela generated a great economic influx in the city, it also led to substantial negative environmental impact. Shankar et al. (2026) tracked the Sangam across all three phases and found the following results displayed in the table.

Table 9. Water quality at the Sangam before, during and after the Maha Kumbh 2025 (Shankar et al., 2026)

Phase	Dissolved Oxygen (mg/L)	Biochemical Oxygen Demand (mg/L)	Chemical Oxygen Demand (mg/L)
Before	10.2–10.7	2.1–2.6	—
During	Falling	Up to 8.8	Up to 30
After	Partial recovery	Still elevated	Still elevated

Source: Shankar et al. (2026)

The above table clearly indicates the state of the river which went from good quality before the event to a clear pollution pulse during it, with only partial recovery afterwards. Nutrient enrichment also worsened as it rose (nitrate 3.1 mg/L, phosphate 0.52 mg/L, sulphate 35.5 mg/L) primarily due to mass bathing and ritual discharges. Microplastic pollutants rose from a mean of 22.07 ± 9.39 to 70.0 ± 43.60 particles/L, dominated by PET, polystyrene, nylon and HDPE.

In February 2025, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) informed the National Green Tribunal (NGT) that the water in Ganga and Yamuna at the Maha Kumbh was not fit for bathing, stating *very high faecal coliform levels arising because of sewage contamination, followed by two continuous weeks of testing. The tribunal, therefore, sought responses from the government of Uttar Pradesh, the Prayagraj Mela Authority, and the Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board regarding inadequate sanitation facilities, which had led to open defecation*

along the banks of the Ganga (Deccan Herald, 2025; Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board, 2025).

The Uttar Pradesh government spent US\$167 million on sanitation for the Maha Kumbh, which paid for 145,000 portable toilets across the fairground; Temporary Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) that cleaned dirty water before it got back into the river; Decentralised Waste Water Systems (DWWTS) placed inside the temporary camps, so waste is cleaned where it is produced instead of being piped far away; Hybrid Granular Sequencing Batch Reactors (hgSBR), which were tanks designed to handle heavy loads of waste quickly; a 200 km underground drainage network to carry sewage away from the riverbank; Internet of Things (IoT) monitoring sensors, which were automatic electronic sensors that measure pollution continuously and send readings in real time; and Gamma radiation sterilisation technology from Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), which used radiation to kill germs in medical and human waste. Despite all of which, the water quality targets were not met (Down To Earth, 2025b); according to the assessment by “Down To Earth”, gaps in enforcement and poor upkeep of the equipment limited the overall effectiveness of the same (Down To Earth, 2025a).

9. Preparation for the Nashik Kumbh Mela 2027

Maharashtra has legislated a dedicated Kumbh Mela Authority, modelled around the one for Uttar Pradesh, to provide a legal framework for the Kumbh Mela and to improve crowd management. The Nashik Trimbakeshwar Kumbh Mela Authority (NTKMA) has now become a coordinating body (All India Radio News, n.d.; Press Trust of India, 2025d). The most recent review (August 2026), shared by Commissioner Shekhar Singh, covered Ram Kal Path and Ramkund road works, Trimbakeshwar water supply, restoration of Khushavrat Kund, Darshan Path and Dhvajastambha works, with clear instructions that all identified works finish well before the ceremony (ANI, 2026; NewKerala, 2026).

Infrastructure Delivery Constraints in the Run-up to Simhastha 2027

The proposed Outer Ring Road, which is a roughly 66 km corridor being developed by the Maharashtra State Infrastructure Development Corporation (MSIDC) to reduce congestion during the mela, also passes through 25 villages across Nashik and Dindori taluka; this has encountered sustained resistance during land acquisition. As of mid 2026 only 67 hectares of the 365 hectares required has been acquired over a two month period, with affected land owners protesting and demanding a revised alignment and improved compensation (Brij, 2026). An earlier report indicates that the acquisition along 55 km of the proposed route has been completed (Navbharat Live, 2026). The two figures, however, measure different things (area

acquired versus corridor length covered) and are thus not directly comparable, but both point to an overall acquisition which is proceeding rather unevenly against a fixed event deadline.

10. Limitations

The limitations of the paper were that, the numbers calculated for the Nashik Kumbh Mela 2027 are all projected as the event is yet to take place, the numbers used are primarily estimated on the basis of the previous Prayagraj Maha Kumbh 2025. The data included is majorly focused on the formal economy and its impact on the city, there may be a massive informal economy created during the event for which the data would be difficult to obtain as most of it is unrecorded. A large amount of the data may be unverified leading to an inaccurate estimation of the actual costs. This could lead to variations in various estimates. The infrastructure outlay is also a moving target: three different totals were announced between October 2025 and August 2026 (₹25,055 crore, ₹22,181 crore and ₹34,732 crore), and the cost-recovery result depends materially on which is used, so the figures here should be re-tested against the final audited spend. All rupee figures have additionally been converted to United States dollars at a single exchange rate, so the dollar values will shift with any movement in the rupee.

11. Conclusion

Overall, the environmental and sanitation issues faced by the Uttar Pradesh Government after the Maha Kumbh 2025, along with the gap between the announced capital outlay and the realised infrastructure in the preparation for the Nashik Kumbh Mela 2027, stand as reason for the Nashik Kumbh Mela to have better facilities, improved security, increased investment for hygienic sanitation, more efficient management of crowds, better connectivity, and more trained tourist guides. The Government can also invest in skilling the unemployed, which, in turn, can be used as an effective source of income. Overall, if managed more efficiently, the event could not only be an attraction for Indians, but could also be posed as a tourist event, such as of the events in Spain or Italy.

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