

Beyond the Bans and Ghats - A Study of Temples and
Religious Tourism in Vrindavan and Mathura

Discover India Program, 2019-2020

Certificate

This is to certify that the work incorporated in this report titled “*Beyond the Bans and Ghats – A Study of Temples and Religious Tourism in Vrindavan and Mathura*”, submitted by the undersigned Research Team, was carried out under my mentorship. Such material that has been obtained from other sources has been duly acknowledged.

S. NO	Name	Signature
1	Aditya Heda	
2	Aishani Choubey	
3	Anushree Mashruwala	
4	Aryaman Uttkarsh	
5	Ayush Goswami	
6	Kavish Nijhawan	
7	Mayukha Vemulapalli	
8	Nehal Kumath	
9	Ria Saldanha e Fernandes	
10	Ritvik Dahiya	
11	Shrish Sukhija	
12	Simran Patil	
13	Vinati Punamiya	

Mentor: Neeraj Gangal

Signature:

Date:

राधे राधे

List of students

S.NO	Name	Roles in the team	Signature
1	Aditya Heda	Audio Visuals	
2	Aishani Choubey	Content Writer	
3	Anushree Mashruwala	Creatives	
4	Aryaman Uttkarsh	Audio visuals	
5	Ayush Goswami	Leader	
6	Kavish Nijhawan	Finance	
7	Mayukha Vemulapalli	Content Writer	
8	Nehal Kumath	Audio Visuals	
9	Ria Saldanha e Fernandes	Content Writer	
10	Ritvik Dahiya	Finance	
11	Shrish Sukhija	Logistics	
12	Simran Patil	Content Writer	
13	Vinati Punamiya	Logistics	

Table of Contents

Sr. no.	Chapter	Page no.
Chapter 1	Introduction	1
1.1	Importance of Radha and Krishna in Vrindavan and Mathura	1
1.2	History of Vrindavan and Mathura	2
1.3.1	Geographical Depiction	4
1.4	Significance of temples in the society of Vrindavan and Mathura	5
1.5	Aims and Objectives	6
1.6	Topic	7
1.7	Rationale	7
1.8	Research Focus	8
1.9	Research Methodology	8
Chapter 2	Literature Review	18
2.1	Religious Tourism	18
2.2	Development	23
2.3	Religion	25
2.4	Tourism	27
2.5	Socio-Economic Status	30
2.6	Environment	32
2.7	Gaps in Literature	34
Chapter 3	Findings and Observations	38
Chapter 4	Analysis and Inferences	

Chapter 5	Conclusion	47
5.1	Vrindavan and Mathura through the years	47
5.2	Vrindavan and Mathura: Today and Tomorrow	48
5.3	Limitations and scope for further research	49
	References	51
	Appendices	53
	Glossary of terms	60

Acknowledgements

The Discover India Program has given us the opportunity to explore the temple towns of Vrindavan and Mathura and learn about the evolution of religious tourism, but moreover it has taught us about group dynamics, the skills that are required to conduct a cohesive research and the importance of discipline and communication. The ride has been highly enriching and enthralling and has produced a successful end result, but it has required a great deal of help and guidance from many people, for which we are eternally grateful.

We would like to convey our special thanks to Dr. Dishan Kamdar, Vice Chancellor of FLAME University, Pune, Dr. Santosh Kudtarkar, Dean of FSLE, FLAME University and the Discover India Program Committee Head, Mr. Kunal Ray for providing us with the opportunity to conduct this research in Vrindavan and Mathura and for their constant support.

We owe our deepest gratitude to our faculty mentor, Mr. Neeraj Gangal, Director of Student Engagement, for showing keen interest in our work and guiding us through the process. He encouraged us to challenge ourselves, look at things critically and also provided us with any information that could add value to and benefit our research.

We would also like to thank Dr. Viraj Shah, Dr. Divya Balan, Dr. Poonam Gandhi as well as Dr. K.S Mochish for their continual feedback and timely and unconditional support throughout the project. Additionally, a special mention to Professor. Khyati Jagani for providing her valuable inputs for starting our research and Dr. Lalit Saraswat for his guidance and contacts.

Most importantly we would like to thank all the members who have participated in and contributed to our research, adding value to it. We would especially like to thank Shri Braj Raj Goswami Ji, pandit at Banke Bihari Mandir and Mr. Vasudev Saraswat, Senior Executive Hospitality at the Vrindavan Chandrodaya Mandir, for their patience and hospitality. They have been instrumental in our research.

Abstract

Vrindavan and Mathura are considered to be home to over 5000 temples, wherein each temple has a different ascribed meaning to the deity. Unlike other religious places such as Shirdi or Amritsar, they don't have one sole temple that holds great significance and value in the city, rather, these temple towns foster hundreds of relatively smaller temples. Yet, the town, along with temples, have seen a new era of development and urbanisation. These factors that these cities give Radha utmost importance and at times worship and believe in her more than they believe in Lord Krishna are the few factors that compelled us to explore this research.

This study revolves around the understanding, perceiving and documenting of the evolution of tourism with respect to the sacred cities of Vrindavan and Mathura. The primary intent is to qualitatively study the change in tourism in the past twenty years, what and who were responsible for this change and what attracts the tourists to Vrindavan and Mathura. Our primary research included face to face in-depth interviews and participant observations. Vrindavan is incomplete without its temples and its spiritual Gurus. Furthermore, these priests are the heart of these temples, therefore we incorporated the temple management, the vendors and shopkeepers in and around the temple vicinity, Government officials and the heart of Vrindavan itself, its people.

Through our on-field research on ground zero (Vrindavan) we discovered that the land which was once claimed by the Lords is now being reclaimed by tourists. As commercialisation, modernisation and urbanisation have taken their course, traditions still coexist and have withstood the winds of change. The locals of Vrindavan and Mathura are aware that tourism will grow and that the change is inevitable. Yet, they have accepted it because they believe Lord Krishna has his hand on the movement and developments.

In our findings, we have showcased how the evolution of religious tourism has financially affected the development of the cities and the overall growth of the population. The urbanisation of Vrindavan and Mathura has brought about the change in the city and the pattern of devotion that the deities shower upon Lord Krishna.

Keywords- Vrindavan, Mathura, Tourism, Religion, Temple Economy, Culture

List of Figures:

Sr. No.	Figure	Caption	Page No.
Chapter 1			
1.	1.1	Map of Mathura district	4
Chapter 2			
2.	2.1	Dimensions of religious tourism	19
3.	2.2	Pilgrimage- Tourist continuum	21
4.	2.3	Abraham Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory	22
5.	2.4	Growth of Mathura - Vrindavan Tourism	28
Chapter 3			
6.	3.1	Intersectionality of various human cultures as stated by author	41
7.	3.2	Intersectionality of various human cultures as seen by us	42
6.	3.3	Interdependency of Human Culture and Temple Economy	43

List of Tables:

Sr. No.	Tables	Caption	Page No.
		Chapter 1	
1.	1.1	Table of samples	10
2.	1.2	List of Interviews	14
		Chapter 2	
3.	2.1	Visits in important tourist places in Uttar Pradesh	29
4.	2.2	Annual tourist visit statistics	29
5.	2.3	Events occurred	34

Chapter 1 : Introduction

1.1 - Importance of Radha and Krishna in Vrindavan and Mathura

In a fast-moving, world where we often tend to recognize our roots, exist Vrindavan and Mathura which constantly remind us of their history and significance. But where can this history be traced back to? According to the Puranas, Tirtharaja once asked Bhagvan Krishna if he is considered the king of all holy places why Vrindavan is the only holy place that does not come to him with offerings. On this Lord Krishna's eyes brimmed with tears and he replied to Tirtharaja, saying "it's true that I have made you the king of all holy places but not the king of my home. The holy land of Vrindavan is not just my home but also the sacred place of my beloved Radha's pastimes. We reside there eternally. Therefore, it is not merely just a holy place."

Vrindavan is not just a holy place which is a *svarupa* of Krishna but it is considered that Lord Krishna and his abode are non-different. Various events are said to have taken place in the magical lands of Vrindavan and Mathura such as his dance which he performed with his Gopis, it's also the first place he preached his teachings of love and devotion, his famous stories of stealing butter and clothes showed a sign of his naughtiness which was loved by all, and defeated mighty demons such as the six headed serpent at a very young age.



According to Hindu mythology, *Devki* the sister of Kamsa was believed to birth her eight children who according to the gods would bring about the end of the King Kamsa. The king who had already killed seven daughters of *Devki* and Vasudeva had every intent on killing the eighth child but with the blessings and guidance of Lord Vishnu, Vasudeva was able to hand over baby Krishna, who was born in Mathura, to Nanda, his friend who lived in the village of Vrindavan.

Lord Krishna is known to be an extraordinary human manifestation of a God according to the Hindu Scriptures. He is believed to be the human avatar of Lord Vishnu and all the other deities are believed to be a manifestation of him. He spent his adolescent life in Vrindavan where he met his eternal consort Radha who is now given the status of a Goddess as her pure and eternal devotion towards Lord Krishna is valued and preached by her devotees.

The famous love of Lord Krishna and Radha is one which has been preached and given the status of an eternal love story which was not bound with the constraints of how the society saw love even at that time. It is believed that whenever Lord Krishna's name is to be proclaimed Radharani's name is never too far. Lord Krishna or Kanha never married Radha.

Vrindavan, and its people worship and believe that all the happiness and prosperity that they earn or receive is because of the blessings that Lord Krishna and Radha shower upon them. The people of Braj are staunch believers that if they leave Vrindavan they will leave the blessings and protection of Lord Krishna.

1.2 - History of Vrindavan and Mathura

In order to explore Krishna, one must discover the roots of Vrindavan and Mathura. Vrindavan is a special mythical place for Hindus in India, but where does it emerge from and what makes it so significant and attractive to visitors in the present day and contemporary times? To answer such questions, the curious will have to trace back to the emergence of the Brajbhoomi. The Brajbhoomi is regarded as a sacred place, as multiple towns are associated with Krishna and the members close to him, his lover Radha, and his elder brother, Balram.

The history of Vrindavan can be traced back as far as the Maurya dynasty, which ruled the city from 325 BC to 184 BC. Around 3000 BC, Mathura and Vrindavan began urbanising and commercialising, and trade began to settle. In the present day, these temple towns actively participate in commerce settlements. In 1866, Vrindavan was established as a municipality with nearly 1000 temples and around 32 ghats. Vrindavan is one of oldest cities in India, but was rediscovered by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in the year 1515 when he was exploring Mathura. The city of Vrindavan is the place where Lord Krishna, in his earlier times, performed Leelas and played his flute. Vrindavan is where Radharani and Lord Krishna spent most of their romantic time. The temple town and historic city is immortalised and commemorated by the poems of Meerabai, Surdas, and Vallabhacharya. In addition to having multiple temples dedicated to Lord Krishna as well as Radharani, the untouched beauty of the architecture aids in the heavy religious and historic impact that this town creates in the present day.

Mathura is widely recognised as one of India's most religious and sacred cities, because it is the birthplace of Krishna and the land where Krishna was raised and spent his early life. Mathura is known as the "centre of Braj" and it acts as a pivot to evoke devotion and attract visitors. The city of Mathura is filled with multiple temples, music, dances and arts as well. It is a heavily culturally significant place in India. It is also believed that devotees can see Lord Krishna come to life and partake in these arts as well. Although historically Mathura has the political seat of the district and the Braj circuit that bears its name, most inhabitants regard Vrindavan to be the cultural hotspot, where most of them earn income and livelihood either from indirect or direct pilgrimage.

1.3 - Geographical Depiction

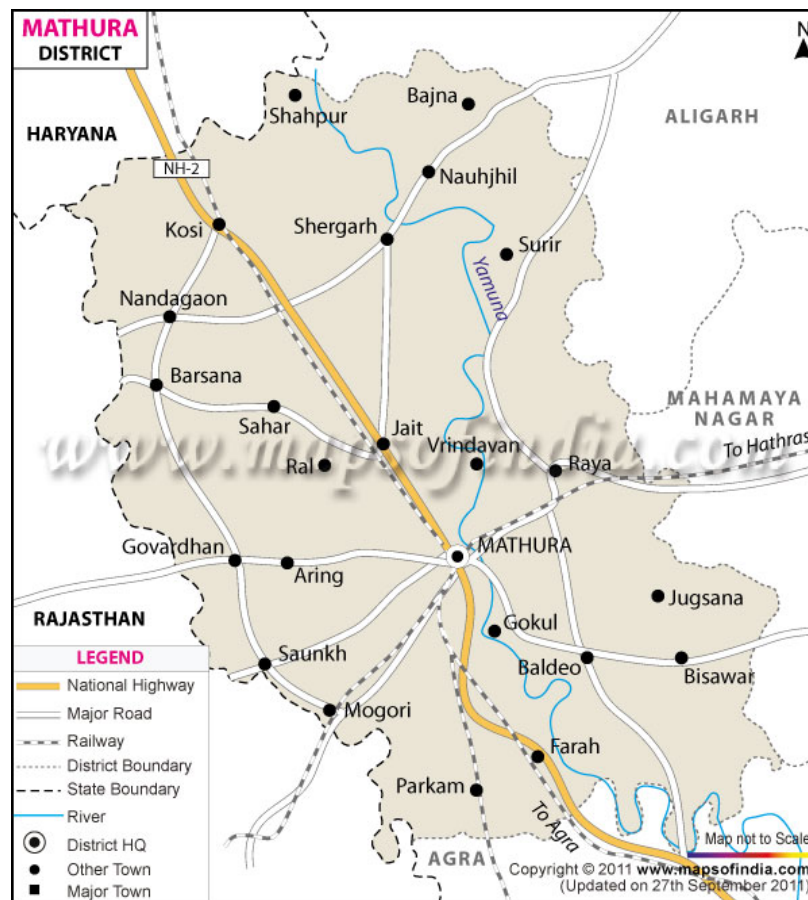


Figure 1.1 : Map of Mathura District

Located on the banks of the prestigious water body, Yamuna river, Vrindavan and Mathura are special places for Hindus of India. These two cities, apart from Agra being one of the other large towns, contribute to the Braj (Brij/Brajbhoomi) circuit. The etymology of the word Braj unfolds in such a way that the term originates from the word vraja. The word was first mentioned in the *Rigveda*, and in Sanskrit, it means shelter or resort for cattle, derived from the term “vraj”, translating to “go” in English.

This land of the Brijwasi people, and home to Krishna worshippers, attracts thousands and thousands of visitors, tourists and devotees every year. The Brijwasis also have their own language; Braj Bhāshā. It is a western-Hindi language, one of the predominant literary speeches of Northern and central India, before the transition to Hindustani around the 19th century.

Mathura, of the Krishna/Braj circuit acts as a catalyst and plays an important role in the 1 Braj, or Krishna circuit, as it is the birth place of Lord Krishna. This city, being only an

hour away from Agra and less than 30 mins from Vrindavan lures in visitors of the Taj Mahal as well as Radha and Krishna followers. Vrindavan is another large contributor to the circuit, attracting more and more tourists as the years have been progressing. Historically, the city has a lot of significance, but geographically as well, it is a highly accessible town. Other towns that the Braj circuit consists of are:

- Barsana- Home to Radha, Krishna's 2 soulmate.
- Gokul- Town on the banks of the Yamuna river where Lord Krishna is said to have grown up in secrecy.
- Baldeo- Land of Balram, Krishna's elder brother.
- Govardhan- As the myth follows, Lord Krishna help up the mountain for 7 days on his little finger to rescue the people of the town from the colossal rainfall caused by Lord Indra.
- Nandgaon- Home of Shri Nandji, the foster father of Lord Krishna.

1.4 - Significance of temples in the society of Vrindavan and Mathura

Every part and corner of Vrindavan and Mathura is surrounded with temples with complete devotion and dedication to Lord Krishna and his consort Radha. Lord Krishna is instilled in everyone and everywhere and cannot be imagined without the other, as Bethlehem without Jesus Christ. Vrindavan and Mathura are homes to many differently constructed and designed to work with the different aspects of Lord Krishna and his life. Each temple is filled with its different kind of eccentricity, contemporary and unique architecture based on a part of Krishna's life. There are different temples dedicated to different stages of his life and how in those stages he performed godly actions and miracles. These temples see the significant and most sacred times during the festivals of Holi and Janmashtami as these festivals are directly linked to him.

According to the old scriptures, the entire city of Vrindavan was a tulsi (Basil) plant of which two stems still exist at Nidhivan and Seva Kunj, These plant stems are believed to be holy and blessed by Lord Krishna. According to the residents of the city Lord Krishna is still believed to visit Nidhivan and perform his famous rasleelas with his

beloved Gopis. A myth is believed that if someone catches a glimpse of these proceedings i.e. the rasleelas, it is then believed that the people who witnessed the proceedings could lose their eyesight.

Vrindavan is also a highly significant town in cultural India, because it not only establishes Lord Krishna as God, but also a romantic, philosopher, friend and guide to many.



1.5 - Aims and Objectives

The aim of our study is to examine the contribution of temples and its ancillaries in the influx of tourism in the cities of Vrindavan and Mathura over the past two decades. We seek to operationalise this aim by interviewing and observing the respective stakeholders.

Our research mainly focuses on the root causes of the increase in the number of tourists and how this influx has affected the economy of these cities as a whole. It also aims to reflect on how different stakeholders contribute to the economy and tourism of Vrindavan and Mathura. Another objective of this research was to dive deeper into the perceptions of the local and foreign visitors of the holy cities of Vrindavan and Mathura

by understanding the reason and purpose behind their visit. Lastly we have covered the socio-cultural aspect of the same, which combines the social classes as well as the cultural differences between the tourists and locals.

1.6 - Topic

Religious tourism may seem to be an extremely broad topic when it comes to India but for towns like Vrindavan and Mathura which are essentially regarded as ‘holy’ cities, their functioning and economic activities are centred around religious tourism. The increase in the number of tourists in Vrindavan over the past 20 years has been tremendously large, the same will be covered in the following chapters of this report. The economy of Vrindavan and Mathura heavily rides on the tourism industry. Religious tourism builds the base for these cities and the livelihood of the people living there is directly or indirectly linked to tourism. The main driving force for street vendors, *pujaris*, temple management is their engagement with Krishna and they devote everything for his reverence.

Due to this increase in tourism, there has been an extensive amount of development in the towns of Vrindavan and Mathura. The construction of roads, increase in the number of buildings, the usage of e-rickshaws around the city and the upcoming Chandrodaya Mandir are a few among various developments in the twin temple towns of Vrindavan and Mathura

Our research is pivoted towards the importance of religious tourism in Vrindavan and Mathura and how it contributes to the development and economy of these towns.

1.7 – Rationale

The towns of Vrindavan and Mathura have a collective impact and contribute heavily to the economy of the towns as a whole. As a group, we were fascinated by how the economy functions in a cycle; the temples bring about tourism, resulting in increase of the state’s income which was being used to feed into the economy attracting more tourists in turn. We were looking to dwell into the same topic as well.

Additionally, we wanted to explore why Vrindavan and Mathura became more attractive as tourist spots than the other towns in the Braj circuit, Govardhan and Barsana for instance. Along the same lines, our research also revolves around studying the developmental changes and improvements that the increase in tourism has brought for the towns of Vrindavan and Mathura. Also, the gaps in literature will be further discussed in the forthcoming chapter.

1.8 - Research Focus

To study and explore the evolution of religious tourism and its socio-economic impact on the cities of Vrindavan and Mathura over the last two decades.

1.9 - Research Methodology

Based on our objectives and aims, the methodology adopted for the documentary for the current research primarily consisted of interviews and audio-visual documentation.

We used Qualitative method of research. ‘Qualitative’ methods are used to answer questions about experience, meaning and perspective, most often from the standpoint of the participant. These data are usually not amenable to counting or measuring. These data are usually not amenable to counting or measuring. Often it includes interviews and open-ended questionnaires. Data gathered via this method provided us with factual data and information on our desired research question. Qualitative research techniques are advantageous in investigating beliefs, attitudes and approaches of normative behaviour; for an institutional aspect or background information, pursuing views on a focused topic; to comprehend a predicament, experience, or from a personal perspective; and to learn about distributed or private knowledge.

We formulated a broad question bank which consisted of general questions for all the groups of stakeholders. When these questions are answered, it gives us an overview of Vrindavan, Mathura, its cultural significance and its market. When we were on-field, we used the formulated questionnaire as a reference point, and made changes to the questionnaire based on the situation and the stakeholder we were interviewing. We further discovered that individuals within a cultural group may present different experiences and perceptions or

transgress cultural expectations. But that does not make them ‘wrong’ or invalidate the research. Rather, it offers insight into diversity and adds a piece to the puzzle to which other researchers also contribute.

Moreover, it is possible to combine quantitative and qualitative methods, although great care should be taken to ensure that the theory behind each method is compatible and that the methods are being used for appropriate reasons. “Qualitative and quantitative methods may be used together for corroboration (hoping for similar outcomes from both methods), elaboration (using qualitative data to explain or interpret quantitative data, or to demonstrate how the quantitative findings apply in particular cases), complementarity (where the qualitative and quantitative results differ but generate complementary insights) or contradiction (where qualitative and quantitative data lead to different conclusions).” [Brannen J. Mixing methods: the entry of qualitative and quantitative approaches into the research process. *Int J Soc Res Methodology* 2005; 8:173–184.] Hence, quantitative data collected helped in backing and supporting the qualitative data collected.

Once we reached on-field, the sampling method that came into use the most was snowball and convenience sampling. When researchers invite people to talk about their reflections on experience, they can sometimes learn more than they set out to discover.

Sources of data collection

Secondary

Sources of secondary data that we used are Journals, Books, Articles, and Audio-Visual Materials. Before going on- field, the researchers went through several secondary resources in order to provide us with a background and requisite knowledge of Vrindavan and Mathura. Initially, the credible sources that we came across gave us insights about the tourism, culture, the market, and demographic information about Vrindavan and Mathura.

After getting an elementary understanding of the topic, the focus was on finding credible scholarly articles, journals and books that focused on our area of research. These sources helped us understand the city, the temples and the significance of each temple in Vrindavan and Mathura. Before going on-field, we established several contacts with the pujaris of temples, tour guides and temple Management. These contacts helped us by providing their thoughts on our topic.

Primary

Our on-field research was conducted in the cities of Vrindavan and Mathura over a period of eight days. In both the cities we interacted with the locals, tourists and the temple management to understand the change Vrindavan has gone through in the last 20 years. We even observe the market and the change in the culture and religious culture.

We interviewed people from the temple management of all the temples we visited such as Prem Mandir, Banke Bihari, and ISKCON Temple. We even felt it was essential to visit the Vrindavan Research Institute as it provided us with their insight about the change Vrindavan's tourist market has gone through in the last 20 years.

Sampling

Information can be collected and observed from a large population through sampling. The total universe through which the sample size was to be taken was unknown. Therefore, for our research we decided to use convenience sampling. Using this method, we could decide the sample size based on the situation and the availability of our subjects. We even followed the non- profitability sampling approach. In which certain interviewees were deliberately chosen because of their privileged characteristics and ability to make a special contribution or provide some unique, critical insights. Denscombe recommends this type of sampling in situations where the researcher already knows something about specific people or events and deliberately picks particular ones because they are likely to produce the most valuable data.

When using snowball sampling, we were provided with the contact of other individuals from time to time who could give us better insights and information to build on our research.

The samples included:

Sample	Contribution	Research Tools Used
Vendors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History and working of the market • Revenue of the shops • Significance of tourism • Role of vendors in temple economy • Seasonal variation in the market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-Structured Interview • Audio Recorder • Collar Microphone

Temple Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social and cultural importance of the temples • History of the main temples • Behavioural changes in tourists • Development of the temples • Insights about the temple economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-depth Interview • DSLR • Audio Recorder • Tripod • Collar Microphone
Tourists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unique observations of the place • Reason of Visit • Information on the attractive spots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi- Structured Interview • Questionnaire • DSLR • Audio Recorder • Collar Microphone
Residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decipher on the Change in the last twenty years of the places • Development of the city • Socio-cultural and economic importance of place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-depth Interview • DSLR • Audio Recorder • Collar Microphone • Questionnaire
Travel Agents and Guides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influx and increase in the tourism sector with viable reasons • Peak periods of tourists visits • Information on the tourists spots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured Interview • Audio Recorder • Collar Microphone
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future of the place • Insights about the upcoming projects • Credible data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured Interview • In-depth Interview • DSLR • Audio Recorder • Collar Microphone

Table 1.1: List of Samples

Instruments of data collection

In order to bestow the samples to gauge information methodically, it was important to choose specific instruments of data collection. Considering the data collected on-field and the information gathered through the secondary sources of data collection, in-depth interviews, semi-structured interviews, naturalistic observations and participant observations were chosen and implemented by the researchers.

- In depth interview
- Semi structures interview
- Naturalistic observation
- Participant observation

1. Interviews were one of our most resourceful tools to collect primary data from our mentioned stakeholders. Such interviews were preferred based on the justification that such contacts would provide the researchers access to “key players in the field who can give privileged information...what they offer is an insight they have as people in a special position to know”(Denscombe, 2010:174). For the interviews, we chose two types of interviews in-depth and semi-structured interviews.

In-depth interviews involve intensive one-on-one engagement with individual participants helping us obtain descriptive data and answering our research question. As suggested in an article by University of Southern Denmark, in-depth interviews “Usually provide rich data, details, insights from community members, program participants and stakeholders about their experiences, behaviours and opinions.”(Bregnhøj and Mosbech, 2020). Our researchers conducted the same for residents.

Semi-structured interviews include a set of predefined questions. “However, with the semi-structured interview the interviewer is prepared to be flexible in terms of the order in which the topics are considered, and, perhaps more significantly, to let the interviewee develop ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised by the researcher.” (Denscombe, 2010:175). The semi-structured interviews were formulated for tourists, travel agents, guides and vendors. Whereas in-depth interviews of formal type were conducted for temple management and government officials.



2. Observations gave room to details which may have been overlooked otherwise. To have a better understanding about the behaviours, social context and meanings attached to the entire city which includes its infrastructure, culture and the people. As “It does not rely on what people say they do, or what they *say* they think. It is more direct than that. Instead, it draws on the direct evidence of the eye to witness events at first hand” (Denscombe, 2010:196) . Therefore, we have taken into consideration two types of observations i.e. naturalistic observations and participant observations.

Naturalistic observations are an extremely important type wherein; a researcher’s all five senses are used to formulate systematic descriptions that can be used further for the study. This helped us in understanding the city better. While studying the evolution of the place, observations play a vital role in data collection. Moreover, “it provides a means for collecting substantial amounts of data in a relatively short time span” (Denscombe, 2010: 204)

Participant observations include active engagement of the researcher in the activities of research participants. This allowed us to get insight into the stakeholder’s meanings, viewpoints and values which in turn, gives us authentic data. Descombe indicates that “It provides a good platform for gaining rich insights into social processes and is suited to dealing with complex realities.” (Denscombe, 2010:214).

Participant observation was applied during few activities such as parikrama, temple aarti and in Radhe Kunj and ISKCON where we observed the communities in their devotional dances and various other practices. The use of multiple data collection approaches to improve reliability is known as data triangulation.

The following table displays some of the interviews we conducted, while on-field:

Sr. No	Interviewee	Designation
Key Stakeholders		
1	Ajay Tripathi	Head pandit of Prem Mandir
2	Jagdish Sath Rajput	Watchman (resident)
3	Pandit Yogesh Kumar Dwiwedi	Politician
4	Trikala Das	Pandit at ISCKON
5	Braj Raj Goswami	President of Banke Bihari temple
6	Vasudev Shastri	Senior Executive Hospitality, Vrindavan Chandrodaya Mandir
7	Devi Shakti mataji	Devotee and Book stall Manager at ISKCON
8	Dr. Rajesh Sharma	Research Centre
9	Pandit Shreemath Bhagwat prasad Shyam Shastri	Pandit
General Respondents		
10	Kunal	Tourist
11	Shivam T	Tourist
12	Berra	Tourist
13	Vandana Jha	Tourist

14	Laldhavi Patel	Tourist
15	Saroj Raj Gupta	Vendor
16	Brijesh Kumar	Vendor
17	Mahendra Mishra	Vendor
18	Brij Kumar	Vendor
19	Adarsh Gautam	Vendor
20	Buble Sharma	Vendor
21	Mahesh Kumar Ahuja	Vendor
22	Devi Singh	Vendor
23	Banmai Lal Gautam	Vendor
24	Chandrapal Verma	Vendor
25	Pradeep	Vendor
26	Muttu Priya	Tourist
27	Gagan Deep Nasa	Tourist
28	Ram Gupta	Tourist
29	Kapuri	Tourist
30	Sanjay Aggarwal	Tourist
31	Swati Jayaswal	Tourist
32	Ravendradutt Tyagi	Tourist
33	Marcus	Tourist
34	Sashi Kumar Sharma	Banke Bihari Vendors
35	Rajesh	Banke Bihari Vendors
36	Lalit	Banke Bihari Vendors
37	Devi Singh	Banke Bihari Vendors
38	Gopal Garg	Banke Bihari Vendors
39	Sudarshan	Banke Bihari Vendors

Table 1.2: List of Interviews

Limitations

- No numbers related to donations were available in spite of our primary and secondary data collection.
- From an ethnic point of view, the researchers asked for Informed consent from all the stakeholders. Oral consent was given by all the stakeholders to use their name, age and designation. However, in certain cases, some stakeholders refused to give their name age and designation, but the invaluable information given by them was used by the researchers.
- While interviewing certain vendors and stakeholders, some of the vendors were reluctant and were not willing to share information about their revenue and incomes with us.
- In certain Temples, there were restrictions due to which audio visual documentation could not be done inside the temples. Camera equipment and the usage of the same was strictly prohibited.

Informed Consent

There is consent to take part. From the researcher's point of view this is particularly important in relation to research ethics. The interviews are not conducted by secret recording of discussions or the use of casual conversations as research data. It is openly a meeting intended to produce material that will be used for research purposes. Therefore, every interviewer was clearly informed the purpose of the conversation and the context of the research. The interview was recorded only after appropriate consent.

Data Analysis

We used Thematic analysis for our paper. Thematic analysis provides a highly flexible approach that can be modified to the needs of the study in hand. It provides a detailed analysis of the data that is to be accounted. Thematic analysis is a useful method for examining the perspectives of different research participants, highlighting similarities and differences, and generating unanticipated insights (Braun and Clarke, 2006 and King ,2004).

Thematic analysis is also useful for summarizing key features of a large data set, as it forces the researcher to take a well-structured approach to handling data, helping to produce a clear and organized final report (King, 2004). The data collected was first organised in order for it to be ready for analysis. The analysis of qualitative data that we gathered incorporated categorisation, Coding, forming units of data, formulating themes and then finally drawing conclusions.

- **Categorisation-** for a definite structure to emerge, the data was broken down into ‘categories’. Our objective and research aim and the literary material helped in the formation of the categories. For a structure to emerge the data gathered is now broken down using the process of coding. Coding is ‘the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising and categorising data’ ‘Strauss and Corbin’.
- **Forming units and formatting of data-** a data unit may be a sentence, phrases, a full paragraph or a number of words that adequately fits the category. The data was grouped in units by allocating the data into categories to put the data into a more comprehensive and manageable form.
- **Formulating themes-** the data is further refined as the researchers observe emerging conclusions and patterns from the data and categories. Relevant themes are formed for the same and the data is then allocated to specific chapters.
- **Drawing conclusions** - Conclusions were excerpted based on findings and our inferences of them. Based on the themes, appropriate concepts were assigned and explained for enablement of further understanding.

Chapter 2 : Literature Review

While writing the literature review, we decided to segregate our research in a thematic order which will give a better sense of idea on how the study of religious tourism took place and how the relationship between the two places i.e. Mathura and Vrindavan co-exists and any other changes that have taken place through the years. Through our research we will also be looking at topics like religious tourism: a brief overview, temples in both Vrindavan and Mathura, their complexes and (management), development, environment, religion, tourism and socio-economic changes which have been classified as themes in our review.

At the end, while discussing the themes in detail we shall also be identifying the gaps found while researching on- and off field which were neither not readily apparent nor mentioned in any primary or secondary sources.

2.1 - Religious Tourism

It often seems to be a difficult task to describe religious tourism. Tourism has a wide range of writings in which various authors have been special, sometimes referred to as synonyms to religious tourism, spiritual tourism, pilgrimage tourism, cultural tourism as well as cultural patrimony tourism. As cultural tourists often tend to visit pilgrims on their journeys, they are often referred to as religious tourists. The region where less research was done is religious tourism and, surprisingly, it is a very old form of tourism as well.

The characteristics of Religious Tourism are as follows:

- 1. It can be considered as an act of worship:** It is well-recognised that the vast majority of religious voyages reflect an act of worship and redemption that is not mandatory, respectively, for Muslims and Jews who make their religious voyages to *Mecca* (Haj). In both religions, everybody is believed to visit the Holy Shrine at least once in their lifetime in a healthy and financial way.
- 2. It can be expressed to show gratitude, perform vow:** Every one of us faces such crises in our life when we are not able to resolve our problems through worldly means, most of us turn to divine help. A visit to a sacred site devoted to the gods/goddesses we believe in, to facilitate communication with the ruling deity of the shrine for such help.

Religious tourism can be described in simple terms as Yeoman (2008 in Katri Nieminen 2012) quoted: “Travelling to visit a place, building or a shrine, which is sacred”. While summing up one can identify the reasons/motivations for religious tourism which are as follows:

- Spiritual
- Deep soul-searching
- Intimacy with deity
- Admiration of architectural or natural wonders
- Educational interest in the history of the site
- Motive to observe and search understating of other cultures, different ways of life, traditions, values and belief systems
- Curiosity
- Commemorative / Desire for authentic experiences

(Monisha Chattopadhyaya (2006), 'Religious Tourism: An Introduction. Religion and Tourism – Perspective', The ICFAI University Press, Hyderabad)

Pilgrimage - Tourist continuum:

According to distinctions made by Richards in (Katri Niemien ,2012) Pilgrimages tend to have a better spiritual and individuality in their character rather than religious or cultural travel and also tend to discover that there are more inner journeys than journeys to attractions. It is suggested that the pilgrimages organised today really don't have much difference from the secular tours conducted by the Government, it is seen that they are more organised just as mass tourism packages including the travel, accommodation, hotel bookings etc as mentioned in the Figure 2.3. Dimensions of Religious Tourism.

Motives behind Religious Tourism

One question often asked is why do people travel? Most answers are said that travel can be seen as a form of searching. It is our nature to seek, and through this one can seek and open the mysteries of the universe. While talking geographically, tourism can be understood to be a sought of migration for a very period of time and therefore, people travel to other destinations in order to seek something which they possibly cannot find or achieve in their own places of inheritance.

According to Abraham Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory, he has categorised various types of needs which are mentioned below:

- Basic needs which are physiological needs like food, water and shelter
- Safety needs like freedom from threat, attack, and anxiety
- Belonging and social needs like giving, affection, love and friendship
- Esteem needs
- Self-actualization needs

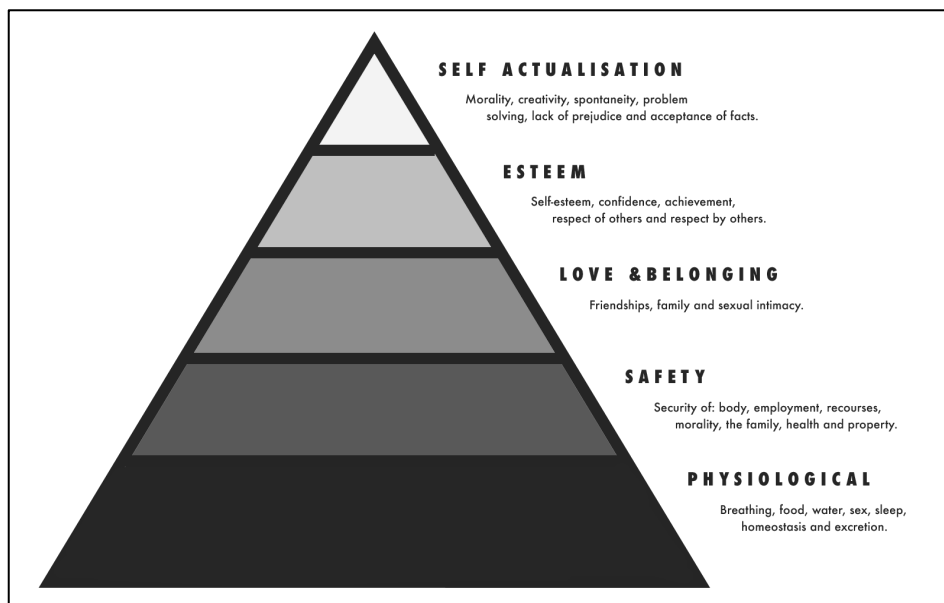


Figure 2.3: Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy Of Needs

Source :Medium. 2020. Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy Of Needs. Available at: <https://medium.com/@elskenneymedia/abraham-maslows-hierarchy-of-needs-cc1bc0124a24> [Accessed 24 March 2020].

Therefore, through this the motives that can be undertaken by pilgrims for religious tourism can differ from person to person, factors like anxiety, fear of death and negative consequences, path towards self-realisation or even esteem can lead one to go to pilgrims like Char-Dham yatra or Haj. It is mainly driven by a social need to have a connection by their own history, culture, community and religion. The religious component in a man relates to the psychological needs which mainly constitutes in a grey area, i.e. only the path of awareness of this urge and hence, various stimuli can remain unexplored to their own selves.

A factor of motivation for travelling can be considered since it can be considered depending upon the intensity of religious feeling with the factors mentioned below:

- **Pilgrimage** – Travel purely motivated by religious motives and obligations. Example Varanasi, Mecca, Medina
- **Tourism in religious space** – Undertaking of multifunctional journey by tourists, religious motivation being one of them. Religious monuments are usually located amidst beautiful natural landscapes and / or they have high artistic significance which attracts large numbers of tourists irrespective of their religious belief, for example Dilwara Temples, Mount Abu in Rajasthan.
- **Tourism during religious time** – Festivals; an example of this could be the Navratri and Durga Puja festivals attract a large number of domestic and foreign tourists to India.

To conclude, Religious Tourism has evolved also through different views, historical events and social structures. Religion has changed things. It is considered to be a pathway as a pilgrimage destination that those holy sites were established, which belonged to certain faiths. Spiritual or religious pilgrimages are also inspired. To make it clearer, one needs to be spiritual, appreciate architectural marvels, and show an interest in the historical importance of the place and be interested in learning certain cultures, customs, values and beliefs in order to know more about religious tourism.

2.2 Development

The temple towns of Vrindavan and Mathura are deeply rooted in history with rich culture and an exquisite range of holy and sacred spots. Over the last two decades, not just

natives, but even tourists are looking to invest in property in these towns. In 2011, it was noticed that the real estate sector in the Braj circuit experienced a big boom. The reason for this boom has been justified by arguing that these major tourist destinations of Uttar Pradesh, are in close proximity to National Capital Region (NCR) and assure minimal loss of investment, tempting people to purchase property in the Braj region.

It is also said that the property values, and the real estate industry as a whole, has reached new peaks in the same year (2011). Experts confirmed that the industry would continually grow at a rate of greater than 40% over the next five to six years. Agra, another town around the Braj region, has been experiencing an exponential growth in traffic and tourists. Architects and investors of real estate are eyeing this opportunity to build more townships beside the National Highway, allowing the residents to have their privacy, space, greenery and comfort.

Seeing this interest and level of involvement from the tourists, the Uttar Pradesh government has also taken multiple initiatives to develop the towns of Vrindavan and Mathura. The building of new highways and improvement of the Delhi (NH19/NH 44) and Agra (SH 33) highways to make these towns more accessible are examples of one of their initiatives. Additionally, the state government has also invested in the construction of Vrindavan Chandrodaya Mandir. This temple is claimed to be the tallest religious monument in the world, with its potential cost at ₹300 crore, making it one of the most expensive temples in the world making it all the more enticing to tourists.

Dwelling into the devotion further, the infamous 'Chandrodaya Mandir' will be a new tourist attraction spot in the city of Vrindavan by the year 2020. It is considered to be one of the largest religious structures and is conceived by the devotees of ISKCON. The sole economic impact of this project will target to attract more tourists which in turn will give a rise to the economic activities of the religious town. The architecture of the temple will be designed to be 700 feet, or 210 meters tall, allowing the tourists to go up to the peak of the temple in a capsule lift. The 26 acres of land around the temple is set to recreate the beauty of the forests during Krishna's time. The complex will also include a *kund* of the holy waters of Yamuna, a Brij Heritage village along with a cow shelter, a musical fountain and lastly a Bhagwat discourse centre which would conclude the entirety of the theme park.

The International Journal of Architecture and Planning mentions that the religious hubs to India, like Vrindavan, structure a huge piece of India's appealing social legacy and are likewise a significant piece of its travel industry, which adds to the social, cultural and financial improvement of the specific territory or area. Since such religious areas have been small villages and towns where the strict focus has been on fast urbanization such that it can support the high weight on foundation because of an enormous deluge of tourists, infringement of the current assets, dilapidated religious legacy and urban space, water tanks, expanding traffic blockage, and so on. The heart of the city which are the religious spots begins to crumble to exceptionally pitiful condition without its unique character. (International Journal of Architecture & Planning

Received 25 March 2017; Accepted 10 November 2017)

2.3 - Religion

Religion is one of the strongest, profoundly felt and compelling powers experienced in human beings of our society. In India, religion resembles an axis that changes as it turns, moving society through history (Madan, 1989). Religion shapes one's economic, political and social life and hence it is considered to be one of the biggest influencers of one's life choices (McGuire, 2008). Religion in India is considered to be of utmost importance and studies show that India's spiritual and religious market is estimated to be over \$30 billion (Phadnis, 2014).

Religion's effect on society cannot be overestimated. In the multi-religious nation of India, it is predominant in the small-scale level communications and practices of ordinary people as well as the high-scale level methodologies and approaches of ideological groups. Religion, in this manner, holds the capacity to represent or destroy cultural structures and practices (Pandey, Gupta, 2019).



Vrindavan, being a small town, has more than 5000 temples in itself where pilgrims visit each year. Our research looked at the 6 main temples which were – Prem Mandir, ISKCON, Banke Bihari, Radha Raman, Radha Vallabh and Akshaya Patra/ Chandrodaya Mandir, whereas we also came across a number of other small temples. Mathura’s Janmabhoomi temple is one of the biggest temples across India and is visited by travellers all across the globe.

The people living in Vrindavan and even the pilgrims have an extremely different standpoint when it comes to religion. The devotees of Lord Krishna and Radha Rani firmly believe that the Godly figure exists in different forms. Some believe that Krishna lies within their close family members like their father, brother and some feel that Krishna lies within an idol which is worshipped sincerely. Similarly, the locals are of the opinion that Radha Rani exists in all women and hence women are worshipped and treated with a lot of respect and regard.

Nevertheless, Vrindavan and Mathura are home to various other religions like Islam. The 2011 census count estimates that Muslims account for 6.96% of Mathura’s population while 92.5% of them are Hindus. Another 1.24% includes other religions like Christians who are usually foreigners who are attracted to the holy cities of Vrindavan and Mathura. Hence Vrindavan and Mathura are diverse in terms of religion even though Hindus still hold a majority population (Census, 2011).

The Krishna Janmabhoomi Temple in Mathura, which was the birthplace of Krishna is adjoined to the Shahi Mosque Eidgah. This mosque was built by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb in the later centuries. The dedication amongst the devotees for Lord Krishna is unfathomable. Devotees are so deeply involved with the thought of Krishna still visiting Vrindavan every night that their day- to-day duties revolve around the care taking and worship of Lord Krishna. For the locals and the pilgrims, religion carries a lot of significance which is shown through their devotion.

One can perceive the divinity of the spiritual atmosphere in Vrindavan just by observing the devotees immersed in the worship of Krishna. For them, their life is devoted to God and by all means the ultimate power, Krishna, is the sole reason for their livelihood as quoted by the Vrindavan Today magazine.

2.4 - Tourism

Tourism: The organisation of holidays and services for tourists.’ (Oxford Dictionary) “Tourism is a basic and most desirable human activity deserving the praise and encouragement of all people and all Government.” This statement made at the XXI United Nations General Assembly in 1967, acknowledges the importance of the tourism industry. Tourism's contribution to the world economy is second only to that of oil and is set to better it in another few years (Singh, 28). Uttar Pradesh is one of the biggest states in India, it also is the most populous state in the country, with a population of 20.42 crores (2012). It is one of the most favoured states in the country for tourists with a steady ranking amongst the top states in terms of tourist arrivals. The state was ranked second in terms of total tourist arrivals and second in terms of the domestic tourist arrivals and third in terms of foreign tourist arrivals.

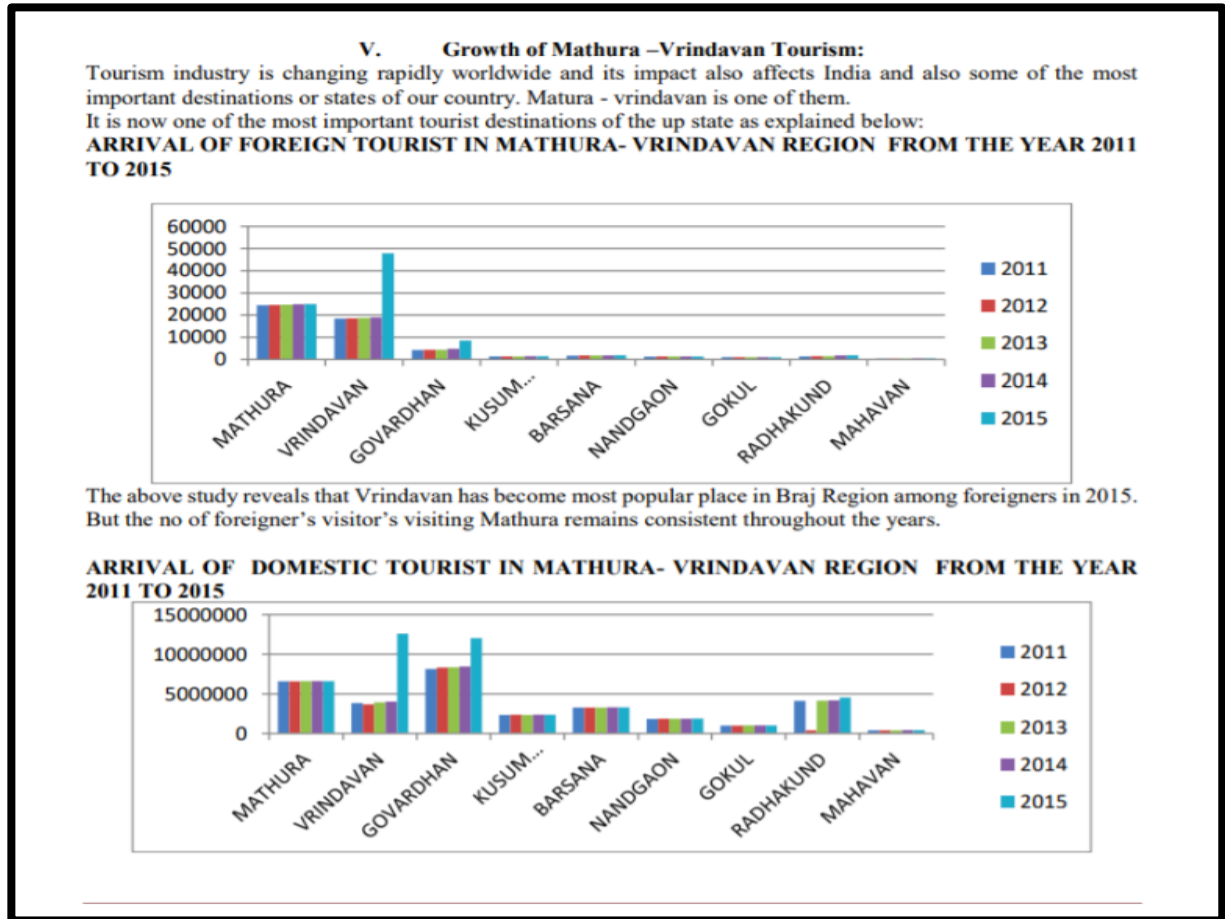


Figure 2.4: Growth of Mathura - Vrindavan Tourism

Mathura/Vrindavan are major towns in Uttar Pradesh, and is one of the leading pilgrimage sites of visitation in India. Domestic tourist visits in Mathura in 2018 is 7660300 and rank 5th among all districts in Uttar Pradesh and Foreign tourist visits in Mathura in 2018 is 27910 and rank 12th among all districts in Uttar Pradesh. (Regional Officers of Department of Tourism UP, 2018)

Amongst the foreigners Vrindavan has become the most popular place in Braj Region in 2015 and along with Govardhan, Vrindavan is also the most popular for domestic visitors. Comparatively the number of foreign and domestic visitors remain consistent throughout the years in Mathura. The trend of visiting Braj region is increasing yearly in India as well as across the world. After comparing Braj region with other top tourist attractions in Uttar Pradesh, you can see that Mathura is attracting tourists on a lower scale than Vrindavan. Majority of countries in the world are not aware about the significance of Mathura and Braj heritage and culture. (Goyal, 29)

The Indian and Foreign tourist visits in important tourist places of Uttar Pradesh in year 2015 to 2019

Year	Indian	Foreigner	Total	Percentage Increase (+)/ Reduce (-) in comparison to last year		
				Indian	Foreigner	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2015	20,65,15,617	31,04,062	20,96,19,679	(+) 12.06 %	(+) 6.67 %	(+) 11.98 %
2016	21,35,44,204	31,56,812	21,67,01,016	(+) 3.40 %	(+) 1.69 %	(+) 3.37 %
2017	23,39,77,619	35,56,204	23,75,33,823	(+) 9.56 %	(+) 12.65 %	(+) 9.61 %
2018	28,50,79,848	37,80,752	28,88,60,600	(+) 21.84 %	(+) 6.31 %	(+) 21.60 %
2019	53,58,55,162	47,45,181	54,06,00,343	(+) 87.96 %	(+) 25.50 %	(+) 87.14 %

Table 2.1: Visits in important tourist places in Uttar Pradesh

Uttar Pradesh has had a rapid increase of tourism from 2015 to 2019 as well. In 2019 the state has had an 87.96% increase of Indian tourists, 25.50% increase of foreign tourists and a total of 87.14% increase of tourists since 2015. (Uttar Pradesh Tourism Department, 2019)

If you look at the Annual Tourist Visits statistics for Mathura and Vrindavan, Mathura has had a 20.7% increase in total tourists since 2015, while Vrindavan has had a 27.2% increase in total tourists since 2015. (Uttar Pradesh Tourism Department, 2019)

ANNUAL TOURIST VISITS STATISTICS- 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019																	
S. NO	REGIONAL OFFICE	TOURIST PLACE	2015			2016			2017			2018			2019		
			INDIAN	FOREIGN	TOTAL	INDIAN	FOREIGN	TOTAL	INDIAN	FOREIGN	TOTAL	INDIAN	FOREIGN	TOTAL	INDIAN	FOREIGN	TOTAL
1	D.D.T., AGRA	1-BATESHWAR	875000	1800	876800	895000	2000	897000	896000	2100	898100	914270	2297	916567	945599	2460	948059
		2-AGRA	9486670	1345765	10812435	8970126	1362791	10332917	8654418	1614588	10269006	8949879	1678556	10628435	9185808	1680476	10866284
		3-MATHURA	6626000	25000	6651000	6630000	25100	6655100	7226700	26605	7253305	7660300	27910	7688210	8240400	29435	8269835
		4-VRINDAVAN	12600000	47890	12647890	12650000	48000	12698000	13788500	50880	13839380	14850200	53980	14904180	16036100	56960	16093060
		5-GOVARDHAN	12050000	8500	12058500	12090000	8600	12098600	13178100	9115	13187215	15989700	10660	16000360	16889400	11200	16900600
		6-KUSUM SAROVAR	2375000	1500	2376500	2378000	1550	2379550	2592020	1645	2593665	2729550	1870	2731420	2902300	1992	2904292
		7-BARSANA	3310500	1900	3312400	3316000	1950	3317950	3614440	2070	3616510	3885400	2200	3887600	4265700	2540	4268240

Table 2.2: Annual tourist visit statistics

Along with this at the state level, the government tourism agencies have identified pilgrimage sites as repositories of religious and cultural resources and therefore began to

promote them as destinations for different kinds of tourism including tourism and heritage tourism. Several states including Uttar Pradesh have formulated specific policies towards this goal. For example, the Uttar Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation (established in 1974) developed two main objectives for pilgrimage sites: first, to promote these as tourism destinations for both religiously inclined and ‘cultural’ travellers interested in seeing historical monuments, major events and festivals; second, to work with the travel industry and private tourism operators to create ‘tourism circuits’ that include a combination of different visitor experiences (U.P. Tourism, 2006).

In particular, the policies aim to promote the tourism circuit linking Delhi (the national capital), Mathura-Vrindavan (a popular pilgrimage site) and Agra (the city where the Taj Mahal stands). The agency’s emphasis is to encourage national and regional private tour companies, tour bus operators, ashrams, and hoteliers to provide comprehensive package tours that include transport, accommodation, and visits to cultural performances and events in these circuits (U.P. Tourism, 2006).

2.5 Socio-Economic Status

The temple management of most of the temples in Vrindavan and Mathura consists of multiple pujaris, pandits and government officials, in order to ensure safety and security in the premises.

It can be observed that the main pujaris who conduct the major aartis of the day feel connected to Lord Krishna on a spiritual level. Additionally, the oneness that they often feel with the Lord is a bond they claim is unbreakable. A decent share of residents as well have embodied Lord Krishna and his traits in their daily lives. Although they did not disclose numbers, it is shared knowledge that the pujaris at the highest level of the temple organisation are economically more balanced than the ones at the lower steps of the temple hierarchy (Tomlinson, Smith, Manderson, “Flows of Faith: Religious Reach and Community in Asia and the Pacific”, 2012).

As mentioned earlier, residents of the towns Vrindavan and Mathura also feel connected to God in multiple ways. It can be noticed that none of them feel compelled to complete their duties, rather they do it willingly. Similarly, the street vendors and shop owners in Vrindavan on crowded marketplaces such as Banke Bihari continually claim

that their daily driving force is their devotion towards the Lord. Most of the vendors belong to the lower class. It is astonishing to learn that they are beyond happy with their incomes and do not consider their position in society relevant or count their profits as their motto is that they do it for the love of God. The shop owners are of low to middle class, also content and satisfied with their income as their activities are tied to God and religion, to which they are devoted and fully committed.

Vrindavan and Mathura are incredibly bustling towns with serene beauty. Visitors and tourists are most drawn to the devotion and Bhakti that the people of Vrindavan embody. After visiting these towns, most tourists leave with a changed perspective on devotion and religion, often indulging in the Radhe Radhe merchandise sold all over the towns. Visitors and tourists also contribute to the temples, in the form of donations. The size of the donations can often vary depending on the tourist (Ahamed, “Socio-Economic Condition of Vrindavan, Mathura District, Uttar Pradesh, India”, 2018).

However, tourists of all ages, classes and socio-economic statuses can be seen in Vrindavan and Mathura. Tourism is the main activity that upheavals the economic conditions of a place like Vrindavan. Tourists from all around the world not only are drawn to this religious destination to express their devotion but also to experience the incredible architecture that these temples have to offer and keep the economic cycle moving. With improvement in technology and government stabilisation over the years, led to increased interest in travel for education, sightseeing and religious purposes. The temples form the core of the city and pave way for the government to ensure the maintenance of these tourist spots through funding and restoration of projects.

The economic impact of tourism has multiple dimensions. It has a nourishing factor over the city of Krishna as well as over the country which further leads to the stimulation of developmental processes, restores cultural values and heritage. In addition to this, tourism also provides a strong front in creation of employment opportunities even in abast and inherent areas.

2.6 - Environment

India is a country with many religions and many pilgrimage towns. These pilgrimage towns have been facing a lot of development, specifically urban development. Although these towns in India have an increased number of tourists, along with uncontrolled urban development and are driven by the assisting residential amenities and infrastructure and are therefore facing an environmental degradation. Issues about environmental changes are particularly critical in India as there are millions of people that visit numerous pilgrim cities within the country annually. The drastic increase of urbanisation and development mixed with activities of religious tourism has led to a significant degradation of the overall environment across Vrindavan and Mathura. Due to this, the vast forests, meadows and groves which one sees in the popular images of Vrindavan have all turned into industrial or residential and infrastructural developments (Kumar, 119).

Socio economic and socio-cultural processes that arise from within and outside of Vrindavan shape the urban development and tourism in the Indian temple town. There has been an increasing number of middle- and upper-class citizens that travel to pilgrim sites over the last 20 years and these citizens demand urban amenities along with their spiritual encounter. All the processes that alter the town's socio-environment such as industrialisation, religious tourism, industrial and residential expansion are not frequently conducted in consultations with the local society and the local people don't seem to be prepared to deal with the environmental consequences that are implied with these processes. (Jacobsen, 116)

Vrindavan is facing a number of social and environmental complications, including unemployment and poor overall public infrastructure; poor sanitation and civic facilities, spiralling population densities, deforestation and overdevelopment of real estate; loss of biodiversity and natural habitat; increased energy consumption, increased production of waste and pollution; water security and solid waste management issues; health issues from water-borne illnesses, and an acute lack of drinking water.(Banerjee 2004). Along with this, the Yamuna is extremely polluted because of the industrial waste from the factories and also all the sewage and wastewater of Vrindavan drain into the river. Yamuna's water was declared unsafe for drinking and bathing by the government which shows how serious the problem is. Forests that are vanishing, dusty roads, open and clogged sewers, overflowing drain, piles of waste and loud traffic are an everyday sight in the town.

The poorly regulated, 'free-for-all' market has led to negative impacts on the social, cultural, religious and environmental situation, the most visible being ecological degradation. On one hand, there is rapid urbanisation both in terms of demographic change (with an increased migrant population) and conversions from agricultural to urban land uses and speculative real estate that is supposed to serve increasing visitation. On the other, this growth is not supported by necessary infrastructure and environmental services: water supply is inadequate for the increased population (of residents and visitors) (Sharan, 1995); the sewage disposal system through surface drains is near collapse (Haberman, 2006); and solid waste is a menace (FoV, 1998: 11).

The environmental problems, as much as they are related to urban expansion and visitor flows, are also related to the deeper issues of inadequate institutional arrangements that exist for the management of the environment. Most responsibility for the protection and management of the environment is to be shared amongst different state government agencies including the Department of Environment, Forest Department, Uttar Pradesh Jal Nigam, Uttar Pradesh State Pollution Control Board, and Uttar Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation. A close reading of their mandates and interviews with the officials from these agencies reveals that they work independently of each other, pursuing their own objectives and leaving out pilgrimage related environmental issues. The existing confusion regarding institutional responsibility and jurisdictional authority of individual government agencies has also created an 'institutional vacuum' which further contributes to the process of environmental degradation (Shinde, 2012: 126). However, there is a sliver of hope as a few religious gurus use their highly revered social status to drive environmental awareness; by interpreting Krishna as 'an environmentalist' and using moral and ethical perspectives, they link theology with environmental protection and management (Haberman, 2006). They also appeal to local residents and visitors by framing the responsibility for environmental protection as devotional service to Krishna (Shinde, 2011: 458). There exists a potential that the social relationships that define the pilgrimage economy may also be harnessed for a better community engagement in environmental concerns.

Many NGOs and civil society organisations have taken environmental protection measures, but most local people have few environmental concerns, as most of our contact and interviews suggest. With the exception of The Braj Foundation, many local projects lack the finances or political support to realise their (sacred) dreams and do not receive

significant support from people or religious institutions. Environmental and heritage conservation issues and advocacy are focused on educated awareness and globally funded environmental NGOs (Kumar, 124).

2.7 - Gaps in Literature

- The existing literature provides little to no information as to how the temples in Vrindavan and Mathura utilise the earnings they make and donations they receive. Through this research, it was found what the temples do with their donations . For instance, Prem Mandir constructed a temple which provides free X-ray and homeopathy to the public. Subsequently, all the donations that the temples within the town receive help to create *dharamshalas*, *gaushalas*, trusts and also are contributed towards orphanages, ashrams as well.
- The existing literature has an absence of information on the rise of property prices and the number of properties in Vrindavan and Mathura. However, through this research an increase in the number of Ashrams, Dharamshalas, Maths, Hotels, Restaurants were all found.

TIME PERIOD/ YEAR	EVENTS OCCURRED
6th century BC	Legend of Krishna takes shape around the (current) Janmasthan Temple Complex, Mathura
1479-1531:	Vallabhacharya, exponent of the Krishna cult worships Krishna under the title 'Srinathji'
1515:	Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1486–1534) visits Vrindavana to locates the lost holy places associated with Krishna's Ras Leelas
Mid-16th century:	Worship of Banke Bihari ji begins near Nidhivan
1542:	Radha Raman temple built

1585:	Radha Vallabh temple built
1590:	Govind Dev Mandir built
1851:	Rangji Mandir built
1862:	Banke Bihari Mandir built at present location
1958	Keshavdeva Temple (current Krishna Janmasthan Temple Complex), Mathura built
1966	International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) formed
1975:	Sri Krishna-Balaram Mandir (ISKCON Temple) built at Vrindavan
2012:	Prem Mandir built
2026: (projected)	Chandrodaya Mandir being built and funded by ISKCON

Table 2.3: Events occurred

The following places are sacred to Vrindavan and Mathura and are noteworthy in the functioning of this report:

1. Keshi Ghat - The Keshi Ghat is situated on the sacred banks of the river Yamuna, this ghat is known for its holy water and the pujas that are performed here. This ghat is believed to be one of the most beautiful ghats as it is surrounded by beautifully carved palaces which leads to the Madanmohan temple at the end of the Ghat. This place is believed to be where Lord Krishna played with his gopis and killed the famous demon Keshi, after which the ghat was named the Keshi Ghat. Tourists visit this Ghat to purify themselves as it is believed that by bathing in this water you will wash away all your sins.
2. Nidhivan - Found in the midst of a jungle with tree entwining and filled with monkeys lies in the temple of Nidhivan. Nidhivan revolves around a mystery which attracts the tourist to this site, it is believed that every night Lord Krishna and his gopis perform their rasleelas. This myth has been made so

believable as every night food and water is kept in awaiting the Lord which would be eaten the next day. It is believed that if anyone attempts to see this they would turn blind therefore tourists are attracted to this site. The natives and people living around the temple are aware of these miracles.

3. Janmabhoomi Temple - This temple is known for its importance as it depicts and is built in King Kamsa palace, where the Lord was born. This temple shows you the jail cell in which Lord Krishna was born, this attracts the tourist as it is believed to be the birthplace and most auspicious place of Lord Krishna. The temple receives a large number of tourists years therefore high security has been installed by the Uttar Pradesh Government. It is believed that this temple was first built by Lord Krishna's great grandson and over the years has been rebuilt various times.
4. *Banke Bihari*- Situated in the old centre of Vrindavan, Banke Bihari is the oldest and most auspicious temple of Vrindavan; people from all over the world visit this temple to seek the blessings of baby Krishna, the temple was established by Swami Haridas the Guru of the famous Tansen in 1862 AD. Banke Bihari is believed to always have tourists and devotees coming to receive the blessings of Lord Krishna all year round, even on a normal day the route to the temple is flooded with people who come to visit the evening Darshan. The Uttar Pradesh tourism centre in 2017 released a project *“Rehabilitation of Banke Bihari temple area sub projects and its components”* this project aims to provide a broader and improvised experience to tourists visiting one of the most important destinations in the Braj region. This project also aims at upgrading infrastructure and services to improve the living conditions, all this has been done by the government to increase and attract the tourists. Tourists and devotees have always visited Banke Bihari as it has such importance but in the recent years it has been noticed that tourists have steadily increased the frequency of the visits and it has also become a tourist spot for tourists from all over the world, as the living conditions and infrastructure has increased this attracts the foreign tourist. From 1997 to 2000 Vrindavan and Mathura had a growth in foreign tourists of about 13%.. In 2017 it was seen that an increase of 5% of foreign tourists per year is expected owing to better road connectivity. The government has stated that all visitors to Mathura are expected to visit Vrindavan.

5. *Prem Mandir*- The white temple covered with marble stoned carved intricately to depict the stories of Lord Krishna, Prem Mandir was built in the year 2012 by Jagadguru Kripalu Parishat, it is considered to be an international non-profit educational, spiritual charitable trust, it was estimated to cost around 1 billion USD. This Temple was built to depict the love of Lord Krishna and Radha, it also has a very modernised concept of holding a maha puja on valentine's day, this puja was initially started for Lord Krishna and his *gopis* and has now become one of the biggest pujas attended all year round. Ajay Tripathi said that the reason for tourists to come to religious places is because every person has some part of him that believes in God. That is what motivates them to come to a religious place like Vrindavan and Mathura. Tourists visit this temple for its massive structure and beautiful human sized idols placed all around the temples to depict the stories of Lord Krishna and Radha. According to Business standard Mathura and Vrindavan receive almost 10 crore people annually and ISKCON, Prem Mandir and Banke Bihari are high on the list of tourist attractions. Majority of the tourists that visit Prem Mandir were noticed to be couples.
6. *ISKCON*- The International Society of Krishna Consciousness was founded by Srila Prabhupada in New York City in 1966. This society was founded with the idea to bring light on different ways to devote themselves to lord Krishna, they believe that through their ways they of devotion also show the devotees about one's self. According to the director of ISKCON "If you call us a spiritual brand then we are out there to give eternal joy to everyone and the understanding of who you are and how you can get out of this hectic conditions" (Das, 18:03-20:6) ISKCON has attracted the foreign devotees and tourists to Vrindavan as the Krishna Consciousness movement speaks more of spirituality and healing the inner self with the preaching's of Lord Krishna. Over the years it has been noticed that all the foreign tourists have solely been attracted only by ISKCON which shows that the movement is the main reason the tourism industry has increased and Vrindavan being such a small city is now a hub for the foreign tourists.

Chapter 3 and 4 : Findings and Discussions

Over the last twenty years, there has been a drastic increase in the number of upper- and middle-class citizens who travel to pilgrim and spiritual sites. Subsequently, Vrindavan has witnessed a rise in upscale clientele, millennials and foreigners whose impact can be seen on the increased use of hotels and resorts offered by the tourism industry. Apart from this, modern infrastructure and integrated township have escalated within a short span. Samrat Kumar and Elida Jacobsen in their article, *Heritage and Environment: Visions of past and future in the Indian temple town Vrindavan*, state “With the construction of new express highways, bypass and flyovers in the region, such as the Yamuna Expressway, roads are built with the idea to reduce the travel time between New Delhi and Agra and other destinations such as Mathura and Vrindavan significantly.” Pandit Yogesh Dwivedi, the secretary to the former chairman of Vrindavan Nagar Nigam, had himself stated “Prior twenty years, Vrindavan did not have a hospital. People with medical emergencies had to go all the way to Mathura; I constructed a hundred bed hospital in Vrindavan like a mini AIIMS hospital. Vrindavan did not have a helipad, sewage treatment plant and a sports stadium. Vrindavan also has a rail bus specifically made for the devotees. There were children all over these rail buses who had accidents, so we made a flyover to combat that.”

Rise in Population

Another frequent aspect that could be observed in each interview was the increase in population over the past couple of decades. The reason behind this increase in population was explained by the radical growth in economic potential which led to migration from the surrounding region. A direct consequence of the increase in population can be witnessed in the increased area of Vrindavan, from 4.1 square kilometres to 15.8 square kilometres.

The concept of “floating population” can also be explored in Vrindavan. Few of the residents we interviewed were in Vrindavan for a limited amount of time. It is estimated that the floating population of Vrindavan daily is 20,000 and it drastically escalates to 150,000 during important festival days (Kumar and Jacobsen, 117). One of the interviewees, Mr. Ravendradutt Tyagi, who is a citizen of Delhi, stated that he comes to Vrindavan often and he had been coming to Vrindavan since 1986. He further added that there have been many noticeable changes in Vrindavan, along with the sudden spike in population (both tourists and residents).

Growth of New Vrindavan

With the increase in population, Vrindavan can be seen to be distinctly divided into two parts: Old Vrindavan, which consists of all the medieval temples like Shri Banke Bihari, Shri Radhavallabh Lal Temple, Shri Radha Raman Ji temple etc., and New Vrindavan, which consists of the newly constructed flats, hotels and resorts. New Vrindavan is more architecturally distinct from Old Vrindavan which can be vividly seen in Prem Mandir.

Pilgrimage Industry and Rise in Economic Potential

One of the vital observations that could be seen all throughout Vrindavan was the evolution of the “pilgrimage industry” and the economic opportunities provided by it. The past few decades have witnessed the birth of the pilgrimage industry. Pilgrimage industry avails on the point that religion and tourism have much in common (Vijayanand, 1). In a world where modernity and faith are intertwined, it is important to consider that there are similar factors affecting the tourism industry and the pilgrimage industry. Therefore, our observations include the rise of the pilgrimage industry and its socio-economic impact on Vrindavan. Vrindavan is now commercialised in a similar way to a holiday destination which leads to the attraction of tourism and capitalism (Kumar and Jacobsen, 118).

However, like Banerjee claims, "The high volume of tourists and pilgrims visiting the town creates a perception of economic opportunity, but a privileged few have already laid claim to the market for visitors' goods and services, leaving no room for newcomers to secure living incomes. Such as shop owners at the local bazaars, people working in the transportation service, people who provide direct services to temple and ashram residents and visitors (flower sellers, money exchangers, carpenters, electricians, craftsmen, gardeners, sweepers, cooks and musicians).”

The foremost impact of the pilgrimage tourism is via the contact of religious sites and institutions and the visitors. Subsequently, the visitors are also introduced to the business facilities surrounding such religious institutions. Few examples include: travel agencies, restaurants and hotels. Their interaction provides employment opportunities (Evans). Rise in Economic Potential

Temple culture and its interaction with different cultures

Apart from the pilgrimage industry, there was a clear interaction between the different human cultures in Vrindavan: social culture, religious culture, economic culture and political culture.

Before explaining the interaction between the different type of human cultures, we shall define each of the aforementioned cultures:

Social culture includes the societal norms which includes components like demography, age, occupation, family etc.

- Religious culture is created out of devotion of a God of a certain religion.
- Economic culture is created within the interaction of such people and the demand and supply of various goods and services, to sustain their livelihood.
- Political culture involves the political activities of a person.

Another relevant term under our research is the temple culture which is a subset of religious culture. ¹*The Economics of Temple Culture: A Short Introduction* states “The formation and development of temple culture is from a particular temple. Under this culture it was observed that the population of the area surrounding the temple had certain behavioural pattern and economic activities from the rest of the people of the town. This is mainly due to; they are mostly associated with the religious activities of the temple in some form or the others. The inter-relationship of sacred centres from locational perspective has also been examined.”

The article that political culture is solely related to the economic culture. However, we observed that in a religious city like Vrindavan, political culture is closely intertwined with all the other cultures as well. The author of the article also does not include social culture with the temple culture. Pandit Yogesh Dwiwedi, who is a politician himself, said that politicians in Vrindavan and the trustees of temples in Vrindavan have been working together in the construction of the Chandrodaya Temple. The construction of the Chandrodaya temple will provide economic opportunities to the residents and non-residents of Vrindavan, in both the temple dependent market and the temple independent market. The writer of the article does not intersect the social culture with the temple culture.

¹ Though this extract has appeared as part of a research paper on Shodh Ganga, our in-depth search to locate the full article and its author yielded no results. The extract can be accessed here: http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/66859/7/07_chapter%202.pdf

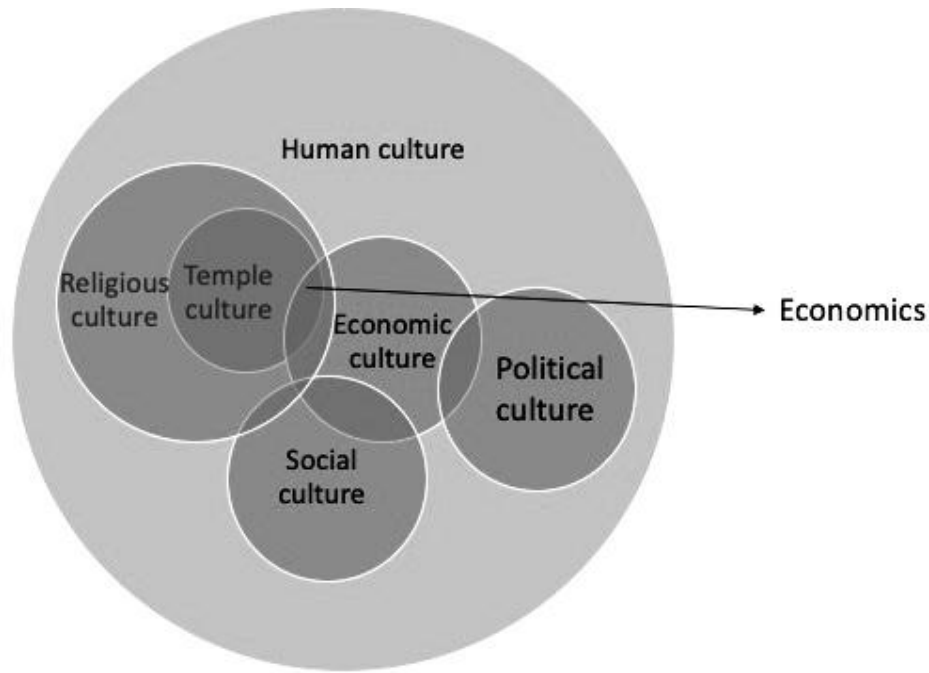


Figure 3.1: Intersectionality of various Human Cultures stated by the author of the article
Source: The Economics of Temple Culture: A Short Introduction

However, our visit to Vrindavan and Mathura suggested otherwise. In Vrindavan we observed a thorough interaction between the social culture and the temple culture. For example, throughout our on-field research in Vrindavan, the locals greeted us with the words “Radhe Radhe”. “Radhe Radhe” was not just used to greet, but to apologise, to request and to bid farewell among many other reasons. It was used to showcase every emotion and had become an important part of the lexicon of a person living in or visiting Vrindavan. Therefore, we notice the term being used inside the temples paving their way to the language of the people residing in Vrindavan and becoming vital and frequently used.

Another important iteration in our research was the interaction between the economic culture and the temple culture. The article also divides, and as observed by us in Vrindavan, temple culture into religious related activities and non-religious related activities. The religious related activities indicate the various distinct types of religious ceremonies affiliated with a particular religion. “For instance, in case of Hindu Religion, it includes the activities of the group of sacred specialists like monastic, pandits, priests etc., and pilgrims and also the activities of other ritual associates such as pilgrim guides, barbers, potters, florists, rest-house owners, shop-keepers, restaurant owners, hawkers, fruit sellers and different menial workers like sweeper, water-carrier, cooks etc. Besides these various cottage industries are built-up

and they are also related with these peripheral activities. Their activities have been largely ascribed by the religious base of temples in Vrindavan”

There are certain non-religious agents whose socio-economic activities are not directly associated with the temple. The non-religious agents are not explicitly restricted by the deity of the temple. Examples of such non-religious agents include various transport authorities, medical shops, stationary shops etc. However, the attraction and tourism generated through the temple has a huge impact on shaping and forging the economic variables of the previously mentioned non-religious agents. Both, the religious related activities and the non-religious related activities, are interdependent of each other and interact with the economic culture via the market. Their requirements of the pilgrim (demand) are met in the market. The religious and non-religious agents provide (supply) those requirements in the market. Hence, the interaction of demand and supply in the market form the base of the relationship between the economic culture and the temple culture.

Therefore, the interactions in the human culture which we observed in Vrindavan during our on-field research are:

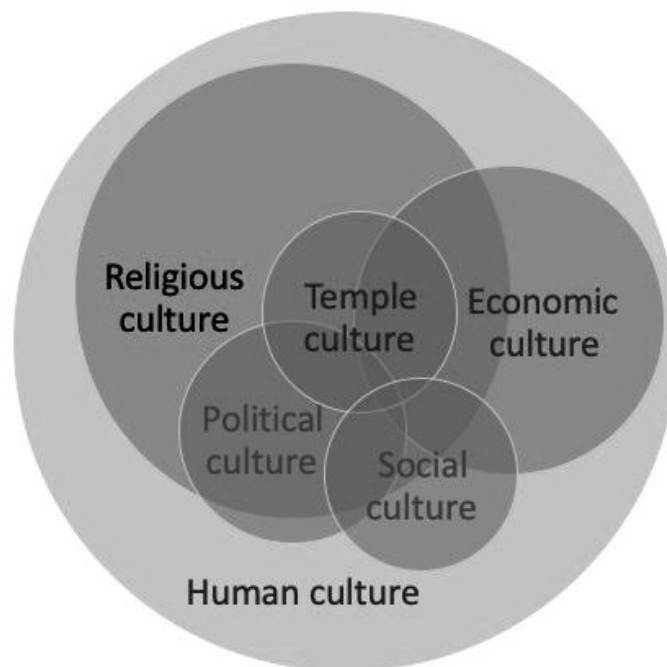


Figure 3.2: Intersectionality of various Human Cultures as observed by us

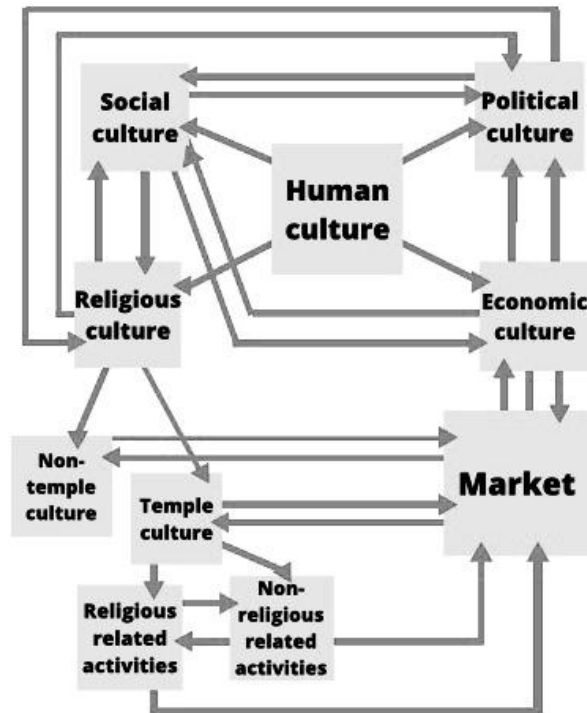


Figure 3.3 Interdependency of various Human Cultures and Temple Economy

Infrastructure

As time has progressed, Vrindavan and its infrastructure has also changed and evolved over the years. In the last twenty years, Vrindavan has seen a rise in the number of buildings, hotels, hospitals, parks etc.

On observation of the city, we noticed the roads were well maintained, huge societies and colonies have been formed, fancy hotels have come up almost in every part of the city and the Uttar Pradesh government has had a huge hand in these constructions with the incentive of increasing the tourism industry. According to Ajay Tripathi, of Prem Mandir, “In the past seventeen years that I lived here, I have seen a lot of development; development of infrastructure facilities. There were not many facilities a decade ago for tourists. The scale of infrastructural development is also very recent” (Tripathi, 06:38-08:15). A study on religious tourism says “The new patterns of travel by upscale clientele including young professionals, rich non-residents Indians as well as foreigners reflect the increasing use of hotels and resorts and services offered by tourism enterprises” (Kumar and Jacobsen, 2017). The construction

of the transportation bridge over river Yamuna at Keshi Ghat has been one of the recent projects the Uttar Pradesh government has taken.

The outskirts of Vrindavan has in the recent years seen an increase in housing complexes as people prefer the silence of the surroundings. Vrindavan has been visibly divided into two parts: the old town with its old temples, and markets and the other half with modernized flats and houses and exclusively designed newer temples. Vrindavan was believed to be a jungle where only few parts were developed enough for villagers to live, there were only few places that had roads and houses (Rajput, 19:13 – 19:56).

Modernity meets Faith

Vrindavan and Mathura are individual locations which hold rich and pure heritage in terms of religion and culture. The famous and most attractive part of these cities is how they have remained dynamic and progressed with time, while holding and maintain the importance of their beliefs. This is one of the major contributors to why a variety of different tourists can be observed i.e. tourists who are young as well as the older pilgrims or tourists, foreigners as well as visitors from India. The Akshaya Patra foundation has incorporated modernity with faith to build the world's tallest temple – Vrindavan Chandrodaya Mandir. This has been done to make Vrindavan and its temples more accessible by the younger and upcoming generation. This temple will showcase a sample of top class engineering, which will be the world's tallest religious structure standing at 700ft tall (Saraswat, 18:54-20:21). Chandrodaya will stand to signify the growth and progression of religion as a whole, wherein world class engineering has been showcased to attract the younger devotees or tourists to come and visit. Tripathi has mentioned that the level of devotion in the minds of visitors may vary, but it exists (Tripathi, 03:01-03:38).

The Akshaya Patra foundation also plans on adding the Walt Disney theme park effect with Lord Krishna and call it the 'Krishna Land' to attract more tourists and visitors. The foundation also participates in charity work and is the largest mid-day meal provider to students in the twin cities of Vrindavan and Mathura. The factory where the food is prepared is equipped with high quality machinery to make work easier, faster and more efficient. These machines are prepare over forty thousand *rotis* (Indian bread) every hour.



Source: Vrindavan Heritage Tower [The images used are excerpt from the Vrindavan Heritage Tower (Marketing Brochure) taken from the Vrindavan Chandrodaya Mandir]

The Evolution of the Twin Cities' Appeal Through the Years

There has been a massive transition in the way people travel to these cities and the reason of their travel. The change has been noticed right from the 16th century, when the word pilgrims started to emerge. It was noticed that their sole motive to travel was to worship the deities. As time took its course, the mid-19th century people's ways of life had started changing and vacations had become a common ritual. Through the 20th and 21st century, it has been noticed

that there was shift in the reasons of visit, “Earlier people used to come only for devotional purposes, but now people come for business purposes, since both their business and devotion are solved” (Goswami, 8:42 -10:32).

While interacting with the tourists outside Shri Banke Bihari temple, it was noticed from their responses that most of the tourists, who visit Vrindavan from cities around the province such as Delhi and Agra, visited on the weekends with intent to receive the blessings of Lord Krishna coupled with entertainment, for instance eating the food specialities of the place. This highlights the transformation in people and their reasons to come to Vrindavan, these reasons solely depend on the development of transportation, infrastructure and development of thoughts.

In light of attaining recognition for Vrindavan and Mathura, media has played a significant role in contributing to the same. In the current day and age that we live in, media heavily influences the decisions and even governs the lives of many. Media is such a widely consumed medium that it has even affected religious tourism. There are two ways in which media has targeted this topic; advertisements and TV channels and podcasts.

Multiple travel agencies and firms have started to advertise and commercialise Vrindavan and Mathura, and the Braj circuit as a whole. Though the use of the internet and media, they are able to sell their firm to consumers and tourists. The image on the right shows an example of an advertisement for a cultural tour of the Braj/Krishna circuit and all the towns that it consists of.

In lieu of devotees physically attending an *aarti*, with the advancement of technology and accessibility of TV channels, they are able to vicariously attend the rituals through the live audio and visual version of an *Aarti* through their TV screens from the comfort of their own homes. The increase in the number of devotional channels on television over the last ten years significantly aids in recruiting recognition towards the towns of Vrindavan and Mathura, eventually resulting in increased tourism. These devotional channels experienced a five-fold increase in just a span of a few years. In 2016, the total ad insertions for religious and devotional channels was 1,75,681 whereas in 2017 it was 2,85,971 and by 2018 the number reached a whopping height of 3,88,273.

Chapter 5 : Conclusion

5.1- Vrindavan and Mathura Through the Years

Vrindavan and Mathura are tremendously popular and attractive spots to tourists in the current day. After all, the towns are the Lands of the Lord. In order to completely bask in the essence of Vrindavan and Mathura, as spots that are victims to the evolution of religious tourism, rather than just towns that homed Bhagvan Krishna, one must find their way back to the 6th century BC. It is around this time that the legend of Krishna began to take shape and unfold around the (current) Janmasthan Temple Complex, which is a group of Hindu temples in Mathura. The temples in this complex have been built around the place where Lord Krishna is said to have been born and have held religious significance since the 6th century BC.

Since Mathura is the town where Lord Krishna was born, it was not until 1479 that Vrindavan took centre-stage in this story. Between the years 1479 and 1531, Vallabhacharya, an exponent Krishna cult, began worshipping Lord Krishna under the title '*Srinathji*', which is a form of Krishna, manifested as a seven-year-old child called *Balak*. Similarly, in 1515, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1486-1534) visited Vrindavan in order to locate and trace the auspicious places associated with Lord Krishna and his Ras Leelas. Vallabhacharya and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu were the first evangelists to come to Vrindavan. Together, they were predominantly important in the emergence of Vrindavan solely, without any attachments to Mathura. It is also interesting to think that Vallabhacharya and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu could have come to Vrindavan for spiritual enlightenment or hospices, much like the widows of Vrindavan themselves. It is with their preaching and following of Krishna that Vrindavan began to shine light in the world.

In the mid-16th century, the worship of Shri Banke Bihari began near Nidhivan. After this, there was a quick increase in the temples being built in Vrindavan. Through all of this, Vrindavan still remained an earthy town. The locals were straightforward in the belief that the simpler that the town remains, the more connected they would be to God as those were the lands he walked on. Therefore, the residents of Vrindavan were initially against urbanisation, simply because the coming up of tar roads, for instance, would come in the way of them feeling connected to land that the lord grazed with his bare feet. Soon enough, they realised that Krishna himself was a *Vihari*, a wanderer and hence urbanisation is inevitable in the town. The residents understood that the coming up of temples like the ISKCON and Prem Mandir did not tarnish the charm of the town and that places like Nidhivan and Raman Reiti would always remain Krishna's land. With the new structures that emerge, the appeal of

Krishna and his land, Vrindavan grows, with which there is a result in the increase of evangelists that come to visit the town for various reasons. Followers of Krishna have grown in Vrindavan, and these followers have helped Vrindavan grow.

In 1966, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) was formed. This year was an enormously significant year in the growth of Lord Krishna's tale. The movement went viral and international. In 1975, the Sri Krishna-Balaram Mandir (ISKCON Temple) was built at Vrindavan. The construction and coming up of this ISKCON temple in Vrindavan added a significant amount of value to the town. The Mandir displayed several forms of Krishna; the lover, the friend, the guide etc. This charismatic allure of Krishna and his roles increased the appeal of Vrindavan to visitors and eventually resulted in the coming up of Prem Mandir in 2012. Currently, the town is projecting the coming up of the Vrindavan Chandrodaya Mandir, largest religious structure in the world, to be ready by the year 2026.

5.2- Vrindavan and Mathura- Today and Tomorrow

Our study has revealed that though the residents have mixed feelings about the coming up of new temples, and the effect they've had on their town and Krishna's land, they acknowledge that urbanisation and commercialisation is inevitable in this fast-paced world. They do not compare the old temples with the new ones, neither do they complain about the taking up of space, as it creates job opportunities for them at the end of the day, but they do draw comparisons between the tourists. The residents have recognised the patterns in tourists over the years. They have realised that the soul or the essence of Vrindavan has not been commercialised, but commercialism is not unexpected in the town. Prem Mandir, for instance, has brought about another new wave of tourists into the town, the modern tourists. Rather than visiting Vrindavan only for the Lord, the new wave of tourists combines piety with entertainment, turning it into a picnic.

Additionally, the Vrindavan Chandrodaya Mandir will bring about a huge surge of followers and visitors as well. Furthermore, through our on-field study, we have also learned that Vrindavan is no longer a place for devotees to practice their fidelity to Lord Krishna, it has become a hub for tourists and those who seek a weekend getaway. It has become the town where hospitality and the divine meet entertainment.

To summarise and conclude, Vrindavan was a place where Bhagvan Krishna could be seen and felt and where his presence could be experienced miraculously. Somehow, contemporary times have shifted the pivot in such a manner that recreation and entertainment is highlighted and put in the foreground, whereas religious practices are dismissed (Shinde,

2012; Greene, 2005). In his study ‘Governance and Management of Religious Tourism in India’, Kiran Shinde states that “In doing so (pronouncing recreational and cultural dimensions rather than traditional religious practices), it is mostly religious actors who use their entrepreneurial skills and social hegemony to appropriate the religious importance and sacredness of the place for own benefits and thereby allow new groups of visitors to connect to the place. Thus, just how the experience of visitors is mediated depends on several factors besides their own motivations.” (Shinde, 2018).

The mix of visitors, day and night, and package tourists are observed in low or even non-existent engagement with God and religious activities. They prefer sightseeing temples and ‘vacationing’ instead. This multipurpose nature of trips that has become prominent in recent times transform the socio-economy of Vrindavan, as observed and highlighted through our study. Furthermore, in order to cater to the exponential increase in the influx of tourism, there is an abundance of hotels, rented villas, restaurants and even modern ashrams. All these spaces are associated with leisure, as a result, religious consumption is coming into view.

With Vrindavan’s charm appealing to a wider audience, tourism opportunities growing and tourists from neighbouring states, such as Delhi and Haryana, are beginning to visit Vrindavan, there is a sense of enjoyment that comes out through the pious trip.

5.3- Limitations and scope for further research

Although Vrindavan and Mathura are generally looked at and studied in coordination, we were unable to draw parallels in this research. Considering that Vrindavan was the first town we visited and given the time we spent there, we became accustomed to the area. In Mathura, which is a slightly larger town than Vrindavan, it made us realise that it required longer and independent focus. Given the paucity of time and vast expanse of Vrindavan itself, the greater focus was on Vrindavan rather than Mathura.

As a result of this, neither were we able to conduct a detailed study of Mathura as we did for Vrindavan, nor could we gather any articulate information from the town. Keeping this in mind, a future research can possibly also look at the towns simultaneously and in sync rather than in isolation. Comparisons and parallels can also be drawn. We feel Mathura is an underexplored town which has a great deal to offer and future researchers can base longer in Mathura than Vrindavan, since we have covered the latter in detail.

Also, the effect of the increase in the influx of tourism on the environment is an aspect we aimed to cover but did not proceed with, as we realised that to establish the relationship between environment, cleanliness, basic hygiene of the town and religious

tourism would not be possible. Given the constraint that we are student researchers, restricted access to any privileged information, which the stakeholders were reluctant to share was not available to us for use in this research.

Perhaps researchers could also dig deeper into understanding the effect of businesses on the evolution of the towns. To restate, as student researchers, we were unable to gain access to privilege information. One can also elaborate on the urban settlement theory and its connection with Vrindavan and Mathura.

References

1. Agarwal, R., Goyal, T. and Singh, S., 2017. *SWOT Analysis Of Mathura Tourism: A Brief Study Of Domestic V/S Peregrine Tourist Visits In Braj Region*. *Iasir.net*. [Accessed 18 March 2020].
2. *Arts - ISKCON - The Hare Krishna Movement*. Retrieved 22 March 2020
3. *Betterthesis.dk*. n.d. *Strengths And Limitations | Better Thesis*. [Accessed 19 March 2020].
4. *Brajtours.com*. 2014. *Braj Tours | Braj – The Spiritual Heartland Of India*. [Accessed 19 March 2020].
5. Denscombe, M. (1998). *The good research guide: For small-scale social research projects*. Buckingham [England: Open University Press].
6. Green, C. (2000). *Classics in the History of Psychology -- A. H. Maslow (1943) A Theory of Human Motivation*. Retrieved 22 March 2020
7. Hammerberg, K., Kirkman, M., & Lacy, D. (2016). *Qualitative research methods - When we use them and how to judge them*. Retrieved 22 March 2020
8. Kasim, Azilah (2011), 'Balancing Tourism and Religious Experience: Understanding Devotee's Perspectives on Thaipusan in Batu Caves', 'Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management', Selangor, pp 441-456.
9. Katri Nieminen (2012), 'Religious Tourism – A Finnish Perspective', Thesis submitted to HAAGA-HELIA University of Applied Science, Finland, pp 1 - 30.
10. *Krishna story: The Unique glory of Sri Vrndavana | Bhagavatam-katha*. Retrieved 22 March 2020
11. Liu, T., 2006. *Tourism Management*. Nova Science Publishers, Inc. New York. [Accessed 19 March 2020].
12. Madan, T. (1989). *Religion in India*. *Daedalus*, 118(4), 114-146. Retrieved March 18, 2020, from
13. McGuire, M. B. (2008). *Religion: The social context*. Waveland Press.
14. Mohan, N., 2019. *Devotional Channels See Over 5-Fold Increase In Viewership From 2016 To 2018 - Exchange4media*. *Indian Advertising Media & Marketing News – exchange4media*. [Accessed 19 March 2020].
15. Monisha Chattopadhyaya (2006), 'Religious Tourism: An Introduction. Religion and Tourism – Perspective', *The ICFAI University Press, Hyderabad*, pp.5.

16. Novelli, Marina (2005), 'Niche Tourism. Contemporary issues, trends and cases', Elsevier Ltd, Burlington
17. Pandey, J., & Gupta, M. (2019). Religion in the lives of Hindu widows: Narratives from Vrindavan, India. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 11(2), 91.
18. Phadnis, S. (2013). India's spiritual and religious market is estimated to be over \$30 billion | India News - Times of India. Retrieved 22 March 2020
19. Radha Krishna Background transparent PNG - StickPNG. (2020). Retrieved 1 April 2020, from <https://www.stickpng.com/img/religion/hinduism/radha-krishna/radha-krishna-background>
20. Research Methods | Definitions, Types, Examples. (2020). Retrieved 1 March 2020, from <https://www.scribbr.com/category/methodology/#examples-of-data-collection-methods>
21. Shinde, K. (2012). Policy, planning, and management for religious tourism in Indian pilgrimage sites. Retrieved 22 March 2020
22. Shinde, K. (2018). *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*. Retrieved 22 March 2020
23. Simone-Charteris, Maria Teresa & Stephen Boyd W. (2011), 'The potential for Northern Ireland to Promote Politico-Religious Tourism: An Industry Perspective', *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, pp. 457-483
24. Udyogbandhu.com. 2018. Uttar Pradesh Tourism Policy. [Accessed 18 March 2020].
25. Up Tourism.gov.in. 2018. DISTRICT WISE DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN TOURIST VISITS AND RANKING IN UTTAR PRADESH IN YEAR-2018. [Accessed 18 March 2020].
26. V, J. *History of the Mathura and Vrindavan Temples*. Retrieved 22 March 2020
27. Vrindavan Location Map, Where is Vrindavan. (2020). Retrieved 22 March 2020
28. Yusuf, S. (2017). *Mythological significance of Vrindavan and Mathura*. Retrieved 22 March 2020

Appendices

Appendix 1:

Devi Shakti Mataji (ISCKON book store manager)

Q. We saw that you have written books? What inspired you to write them?

- When Shri Prabhupada sent us here, after a certain amount of time we had distributed many of these books and people were interested in more subject matters. At that time, we were doing the fundraiser department and we had many donors who had already received all of the books so we started taking excerpts from shri prabhupada's books so that they would understand particular points of philosophy in detail. The books now are in 87 languages. So, we started collecting those books from all over the world and bringing them here to Vrindavan because so many people from all over, every country come here. So, we thought this would be the ideal place to have an international book shop.

Q. How was Vrindavan twenty years back?

- Very simple, many ancient temples were built with five thousand temples. This land had been donated to make a beautiful temple here. So, we came here to help establish this temple and particularly Prabhupada wanted me to distribute his books once the temple was opened.

Q. What kind of a change have you seen in Vrindavan over the past 35 years?

- Because of the tremendous amount of preaching that has been going on here, the whole of Vrindavan has been transformed as a tourist center, now we have buses coming every day from different countries like Berlin and Italy and Brazil. Previously very few people came to Vrindavan, only the Hindu pilgrims used to come to see Banke Bihari and few other temples. But now people come from everywhere because everyone has heard about the Hare Krishna movement.

Q. When did this start, like now on the main street you can barely walk, so there are so many tourists, more than the residents there are tourists I would say in the last 20 years. What accelerated this? What triggered this?

- Because of the worldwide preaching that is going on, you have over 7 hundred temples and we have thousands of Hare Ram centres where people gather once a week which is called the bhakti centres. So, from that cultivation people now have heard about Vrindavan and because they know that Vrindavan is Krishna's village and they come here for different purposes. Before that no one had heard of Vrindavan. So, now all over the world people know about Vrindavan.

Q. What is the Hare Rama Hare Krishna movement, the ISKCON movement doing that is accelerating tourism at such an expedient rate?

- It is accelerating tourism by inviting people to come to the holy places. We have two major holy Dhams, Vrindavan and Mayapur. In Mayapur, West Bengal is where Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu took birth, rebuilding a whole city of ten thousand people. Earlier it just used to be full of rice paddy fields. Now you go there and it has completely transformed to an incredible town like a city. So, here in Vrindavan we don't have space, we only like two acres where Prabhupada built the temples and he built the guest house. Now we also have the gurukul and other administrative buildings but the space is very reduced here in Vrindavan. So, we do as much as we can with the space that we have here.

Q. would you say that over the past 30 years the restaurants, eateries and hotels have increased?

- Oh yes of course in every way possible.

Q. Over the past 20 years, do you think the cities of Vrindavan & Mathura have taken steps to beautify the temples to attract more tourists?

- Yes, our temple has a set of presidents; their purpose is the cleanliness and the beautiful manner in which we decorate the worshiped, so taking up that, now 100s and 100s of temples have raised their standard of worship. Before there used to be 5000 temples, now there are so many more temples than that, that have come up in the last 20 years. Previously, they used to be in a very shabby condition.

Appendix 2:

Senior Researcher, Vrindavan Research Centre

Q. Where is the difference that Vrindavan has seen in the past twenty years?

- The owners are Radhe Krishna. The influx of tourists is increasing day by day. People are interested to know more about their culture, religion, spirituality. The graph is increasing. Belief is at the heart of Vrindavan. Bhakti and mukti is the epicentre. People are naming their homes like Radhe Krishna, Vrindavan due to their inclination towards spiritualism. Movements like ISKCON have clearly attracted more tourists in the past as well as the future.

Appendix 3:

Senior Executive Hospitality, Vasudev Saraswat

- First when people came to Vrindavan and they had to wait for 2 hrs or more they did not have a place to go so they would have to book a hotel, now with the buildings and renovations people can go to Chandrodaya or any park to pass their time
- Mostly all the shops that you will find in Vrindavan depend completely on tourists as most of the stuff sold in these shops a resident can buy it once or twice not more than that. The same shops were there before but now because roads are made and it is easier to come to Vrindavan and it's more accessible therefore more tourists come which increases the income/profit of the tourist
- The businesses of the citizens of Vrindavan are directly proportional to the number of tourists entering Vrindavan.

Q. Vrindavan has transformed from a village to a city; according to you who has benefited the most out of it?

- I think everyone has benefited out of it. Right from the vendors outside the mandirs to the ashrams. These ashrams have become 2-3 star hotels. Because of television and print media Vrindavan has become famous all over the world and devotees are coming from all over the world. To provide them with adequate facilities, Vrindavan

is developing, I know a lot of people who come to Vrindavan for only business purposes. It is very good for the tourism industry.

Q. What is the impact of the tourism industry on Vrindavan?

- Tourism has helped Vrindavan grow and at the same time taken the profits. all facilities such as OYO etc are provided in Vrindavan.it is very good for the hotel industry.

Q. Vrindavan already has over 5000 temples, so what is the motive behind creating the Chandrodaya temple?

- The Chandrodaya temple is connected to ancient Vrindavan. The Vedic the culture of India is temple centred. The education and charity in these temples is done through the temple itself. The temple represents our society in India. The Chandrodaya temple is being created taking into consideration the future. The chairman and senior devotees are all from IITs. Their vision is to make Vrindavan and its temples accessible for the young and upcoming generations. They think that the young generation will not be interested in going into the ancient temples. This temple will showcase a sample of top class engineering, which will be the world's tallest religious structure. 700 feet tall.

Q. What are the positive and negative impacts of the commercialisation that has occurred in the last 20 years.

- The living standards of the locals have increased. their earnings have also increased. The schooling structure was also different earlier. The kids were sent to government schools. Now that they are sent to private schools and colleges, they need to be economically stable. Now that universities have come up inside Vrindavan there is no need for them to go outside. Therefore there is a positive effect of tourism on Vrindavan.

Appendix 4:

Resident of Vrindavan

Q. What are the major reasons for development?

- The temples of Vrindavan has had a massive contribution in the development of Vrindavan, all the devotees who visit Vrindavan do not come to see the politicians they come to witness the mandirs and the life of shri Krishna in Vrindavan subsequently they also end up going to the shops around these mandirs because of which the business of these shopkeepers thrive. Vrindavan's identity lies with the temples of Banke Bihari, ISCKON and Chandrodaya and it completely revolves around our temples and our saints.

Appendix 5:

Ajay Tripathi - Head Pandit at Prem Mandir

Q. Why do people visit Vrindavan and how have the reasons for visiting Vrindavan changed over the years?

- Every person has some part of him that believes in God. That is what motivates them to come to a religious place like Vrindavan which is mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita. People normally travel on the weekends, but the ones that visit religious places such as this come as a result of their sacraments. The levels of devotion in the minds of visitors may vary, but it exists.

These devotees, on constantly visiting these places eventually get acquainted with a saint or a mahatma which is where they gain real knowledge. This motivates the devotees to maintain regularity in visiting these places. A lot of young people also come to visit, students included.

Q. What are the major celebrations in Prem Mandir?

- We also celebrate Valentine's day here. However, it was renamed as the Gopi Prem day by the head pandit here a few years back. This signifies the culmination of the love that the Gopis of Braj had for their Lord Krishna.

Q. How has Vrindavan developed in the past twenty years?

- In the 17 years that I lived here, I have seen a lot of development; development of infrastructure, facilities. There were not many facilities a decade ago for tourists. The scale of infrastructure development is also very recent. The carvings that you see on the walls of temples are also very mechanised now. A thousand years prior man used to use his tools and take years to complete one carving, whereas now machines have made it much easier. Man is still needed in the process but it's much cheaper and faster now.
- Today, there's social media. In the old times, people bonded over Bhagavad Gita and Ramayana. I can see that prevailing, recurring today. IIT students, JNU students, etc. and people from top colleges across the world are trying to research the prevalence of god here.

Q. According to you, why is the Uttar Pradesh government working on beautifying Vrindavan?

- The government wants to make every city a smart city, this is what is also increasing the influx of tourism in our beautiful city and ravaging it in some sense. But I also think that development is bringing more people closer to god's motherland and letting more people have access to the city. Lord Krishna was born here, and it is an important destination.

Q. You have seen Vrindavan since the past 20 years, what is the difference between devotion and reverence then and now?

- There is no measurement of devotion and faith here. The only difference is that the number of people that come have increased because of population increase. People who are financially sound and stable have now started buying houses here thinking that after they retire they will come live in this town which is so spiritual and devoted to God.

Q. What are the changes you see in the environment because of the influx of tourism in Vrindavan?

- That is in the hands of the government . But people have become more aware about the repercussions of environmental degradation. Earlier we didn't have much knowledge about the same but now we do. Because of Swachh Bharat this place has

become way better. They are taking good steps to clean and maintain this place. Without them it would be hard in the future. Even we as people are getting more aware about the same and we are responsible for our Country too. We need to develop and clean our country even further. The Government is a helping hand in this process.

Appendix 6:

Shri Braj Raj Goswami: President of the Banke Bihari temple

Q. What are the changes you have noticed in the past twenty years?

- Earlier people used to come only for devotional purposes , but now people come for business purposes since both their motives of business and devotion are solved.
- Vrindavan was never a village since a village has ‘*kaccha*’ (*raw*) roads. Efficient drainage system and roads were present. All roads were cemented. The scenario of Vrindavan has completely changed since my birth. The influence of Bollywood and the film industry has polluted the rich and pure environment of devotion in Vrindavan. I believe that Bollywood makes songs based on Radha Krishna and harms and disrespects their culture and tradition and values. They tend to highlight different meanings and values of Krishna.

Q. What is the reason behind the tourists visiting Vrindavan?

- This has increased because of word of mouth, there is a significant difference in the environment in different cities in India due to which more devotees come here. People can only listen to the tunes of lord Krishna while staying in Vrindavan. Their only motive is to attain salvation and seek peace. People tend to have a connection with lord Krishna when they come to Vrindavan in order to attain peace.
- Nowadays people see Vrindavan not as a devotional place but as a picnic place. People come from Delhi on sat- Sundays to have chat and snacks. They don't come here to pray but to have a weekend detox from their daily chores.
- In the future years, the essence of Vrindavan will be diminished according to him.

Glossary of terms

1. *Aarti* - Aarti is a Hindu religious ritual of worship, a part of puja, in which light is offered to one or more deities. Aarti also refers to the songs sung in praise of the deity, when the light is being offered.
2. *Ayodhya* - Ayodhya is a city and the administrative headquarters of Faizabad district of Uttar Pradesh, India. It shares municipal corporation with its neighbouring twin town of Faizabad. The city is identified with the legendary city of Ayodhya, and as such, is the birthplace of Rama and setting of the epic Ramayana.
3. *Bhagvad Gita* - The Bhagavad Gita, often referred to as the Gita, is a 700-verse Sanskrit scripture that is part of the Hindu epic Mahabharata. The Gita is set in a narrative framework of a dialogue between Pandava prince Arjuna and his guide and charioteer Krishna.
4. *Brajbhoomi* - Braj, also known as Brij or Brijbhoomi, is a region in India on both sides of the Yamuna river with its center at Mathura-Vrindavan in Uttar Pradesh state encompassing the area which also includes Hodal in Haryana state and Bharatpur district in Rajasthan state
5. *Chaitanya Mahaprabhu* - Shri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, honorific: "Mahāprabhu", is an Indian mystic considered by his followers to be the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the chief proponent of the Achintya Bheda Abheda Vedanta school and the Gaudiya Vaishnavism tradition within Hinduism.
6. *Devki* - Devaki was a woman mentioned in the Mahabharata. Her father's name was Devaka, and she was the younger sister of Kamsha, a cruel king of Mathura of Ancient India. Devaki was married to Vasudeva, a son of Sureshana.
7. *Dharmshala* - a building devoted to religious or charitable purposes, esp
8. ecially a rest house for travellers.
9. *Gaushala* - A gaushala, or goshala, is a protective shelter for cattle in India. Goshala is a Sanskrit term which combines go or "cow" and shala or "shelter". Providing sanctuary, the goshala protects those animals which would have been mercilessly killed otherwise.
10. *Gopis* - Gopi is a Sanskrit word originating from the word Gopala referring to a person in charge of a herd of cows.

11. *Holi* - a Hindu spring festival celebrated in February or March in honour of Krishna.
12. *Janmashtami* - Krishna Janmashtami, also known simply as Janmashtami or Gokulashtami, is an annual Hindu festival that celebrates the birth of Krishna, the eighth avatar of Vishnu.
13. *Kamsa* - Kamsa was the tyrant ruler of the Vrishni kingdom with its capital at Mathura. He is the brother of Devaki, the mother of the god Krishna—who slew Kamsa.
14. *Kanha* - Kanha may refer to: Krishna, a Hindu deity.
15. *Krishna* - Krishna, Sanskrit कृष्ण, one of the most widely revered and most popular of all Indian divinities, worshipped as the eighth incarnation (avatar, or avatara) of the Hindu god Vishnu and also as a supreme god in his own right.
16. *Kund* - a tank or small reservoir in which rainwater is collected for drinking.
17. *Leelas* - Lila or Leela can be loosely translated as the "divine play". The concept of Lila is common to both non-dualistic and dualistic philosophical schools of Indian philosophy, but has a markedly different significance in each.
18. *Mandir* - a Hindu temple.
19. *Mecca* - Mecca, in a desert valley in western Saudi Arabia, is Islam's holiest city, as it's the birthplace of the Prophet Muhammad and the faith itself. Only Muslims are allowed in the city, with millions arriving for the annual Hajj (pilgrimage).
20. *Meerabai* – Mirabai (1498–1546/1547) was a 16th-century Hindu mystic poet and devotee of Krishna. She is a celebrated Bhakti saint, particularly in the North Indian Hindu tradition.
21. *Pandit* - a Hindu scholar learned in Sanskrit and Hindu philosophy and religion, typically also a practising priest.
22. *Positionality* - Positionality describes how your identity influences, and potentially biases, your understanding of and outlook on the world.
23. *Prophet Mohammad* - Muhammad was an Arab religious, social, and political leader and the founder of Islam. According to Islamic doctrine, he was a prophet, sent to

preach and confirm the monotheistic teachings preached previously by Adam, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and other prophets

24. *Pujars* - a Hindu priest.
25. *Purana* - Any of a class of Sanskrit sacred writings on Hindu mythology and folklore of varying date and origin, the most ancient of which dates from the 4th century AD.
26. *Radha/Radharani* - Radharani is a manifestation of Krishna's love. Shri Radha is hladini-sakti, or the pleasure-giving potency of Krishna. Krishna is energetic and Radha is energy. Radha and Krishna are one Atma (soul) in the sense that they are Sakti (power) and saktiman (powerful).
27. *Rasleelas* - The Ras lila or Ras dance is part of the traditional story of Krishna described in Hindu scriptures such as the Bhagavata Purana and literature such as the Gita Govinda, where he dances with Radha and her sakhis.
28. *Rigveda* - The Rigveda is an ancient Indian collection of Vedic Sanskrit hymns. It is one of the four sacred canonical texts of Hinduism known as the Vedas. The text is layered consisting of the Samhita, Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads.
29. *Rukhmini* - The wife of Lord Krishna.
30. *Seva* - Selfless service or Seva in Sikhism, its ordained philosophy, in Sikh scripture, the theology, and hermeneutics is a service which is performed without any expectation of result or award for performing it.
31. *Svarupa* - Svarupa means that one has to know that he is not the Supreme Soul, but rather, part and parcel of the Supreme Soul; that is self-realization.
32. *Tirtharaja* - Prayag is called "Tirthraj" that is king of religious place
33. *Vallabhacharya* - Vallabhacharya (1479–1531 CE), also known as Vallabha, was an Indian Telugu philosopher who founded the Krishna-centered Pushti sect of Vaishnavism in the Braj region of India, and the philosophy of Shuddha advaita (Pure Nondualism).

34. *Vishnu* - Vishnu is a Hindu god, the Supreme God of Vaishnavism (one of the three principal denominations of Hinduism) and one of the three supreme deities (Trimurti) of Hinduism.
35. *Yamuna* - The Yamuna, also known as the Jumna or Jamna, is the second largest tributary river of the Ganges and the longest tributary in India.