

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE EXPERIENTIAL ECONOMY DURING MAHAKUMBH

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Abstract

The first and last Maha Kumbh of 21st century was celebrated across India in the year 2025. To put things in perspective the last Maha Kumbh occurred in the 19th century in the year 188,1 during those days India was under British rule & the britishers used to charge Indians taxes for attending the Maha Kumbh hey shows that they viewed it as a revenue making activity rather than a religious one the current government the current government has pitched Maha Kumbh as the spiritual journey inviting all the faithful to Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh .The government had to make huge logistical arrangements including transportation, food management, waste management accommodation, security and so on this article aims to explorer the different facets of the economy as experienced by the people and explores personal journeys of the authors with regards to their experiences after travelling to and back from the Maha Kumbh.

Keywords: Experiential Economy, Maha Kumbh, Food & Water Management, Accommodation Management, Security Management, Cleaning & Sanitation.



1. Introduction

The Maha Kumbh Mela is one of India's most significant spiritual gatherings, deeply rooted in Hindu mythology. It occurs based on a rare astronomical alignment and goes beyond religious significance—fostering spiritual cleansing, cultural exchange, and economic growth. The event attracts millions, boosting local businesses, tourism, and the regional economy.

Evolution of Kumbh Mela

Origins and Historical Significance

The Kumbh Mela traces its origins to the Hindu legend of Samudra Manthan, where gods and demons churned the ocean to obtain Amrit (nectar of immortality). According to mythology,

drops of nectar fell at Prayagraj, Haridwar, Nashik, and Ujjain, making these locations sacred and the sites of the Kumbh Mela.

Types of Kumbh Mela

Table 1: Distinct Cycle of Kumbh mela

| Type | Frequency |
|------------------|-----------------|
| Magh Mela | Every Year |
| Ardh Kumbh Mela | Every 6 Years |
| Purna Kumbh Mela | Every 12 Years |
| Maha Kumbh Mela | Every 144 Years |

Source - (Desk N. N., 2025)

Why is Mahakumbh 2025 Special?

The 2025 Mahakumbh Mela stands out due to a rare planetary alignment, believed to enhance spiritual energy and make rituals more effective. The massive gathering of millions creates an atmosphere of devotion while significantly boosting tourism, hospitality, and local businesses. In the context of the experiential economy, Mahakumbh is a perfect example of how cultural and spiritual events offer immersive experiences. It blends ancient traditions with modern economic impact, proving that heritage events can drive economic growth while preserving cultural values. (Desk L. , 2025)

2. The Rise of the Experience Economy: How Businesses Are Shaping Consumer Spending

The Experience Economy has transformed how individuals allocate their finances, moving the emphasis from purchasing products to seeking out meaningful experiences. This concept was first presented by Pine and Gilmore in 1998 and has gained traction, especially among millennials and Gen Z. Research indicates that 72% of millennials prefer experiences over material items (Harris Group), and McKinsey highlights that spending on experiences is increasing nearly four times faster than on products.

A key factor in this change is social media. Platforms such as Instagram and TikTok have shaped consumer habits, motivating people to pursue experiences they can showcase online. Notably, 89% of Instagram users report making a purchase influenced by content they encountered on the platform. In response, businesses are crafting unique, immersive experiences to draw in and engage customers.

Even with the growth of digital experiences, there remains a strong desire for face-to-face interactions. Research indicates that the rise in smartphone usage has led to increased social isolation, with teenage gatherings decreasing by 40% from 2000 to 2015. To counter this trend, businesses are providing interactive events, fitness classes, and immersive attractions that foster community and connection.

The retail sector has also been impacted by the Experience Economy. Traditional brick-and-mortar stores have faced challenges as online shopping has surged, with e-commerce sales tripling while department store sales have stagnated. To remain competitive, many retailers are embracing "Experiential Retail," incorporating pop-up shops, interactive displays, and in-store events to create engaging shopping experiences.

Numerous businesses have flourished in this evolving environment by delivering memorable experiences. Companies like Top Golf, SoulCycle, and Dave & Buster's have achieved significant valuations, demonstrating that experience-focused models can be very lucrative. Younger consumers, in particular, are attracted to visually appealing and social media-friendly experiences, contributing to the decline of traditional malls.

Table 2: Notable companies in the experience economy, highlighting their valuations, industries, and key years

| Company | Valuation | Year | Industry/Experience Type |
|----------------------|-----------|------------|--|
| Top Golf | \$3.3B | 2019 | Sports and Entertainment |
| Feld Entertainment | \$2B | 2018 | Live Events (Disney on Ice, Monster Jam) |
| Chuck E. Cheese | \$1.39B | 2004, 2019 | Family Entertainment |
| SoulCycle | \$900M | 2015 | Fitness and Group Workouts |
| Dave & Buster's | \$2.6B | 2017 | Restaurant and Arcade Gaming |
| Merlin Entertainment | \$7.5B | 2019 | Theme Parks and Attractions |

Source – (Bent 2020)

Additionally, the Experience Economy has prompted changes in corporate structures, leading to the emergence of roles such as Chief Experience Officer (CXO) and Chief Customer Officer (CCO), which have gained prominence alongside traditional positions. (Bent, 2020)

3. Literature Review

The Experience Economy and Its Relevance to Large Religious Gatherings

The experience economy represents a business model focused on generating revenue through the creation of memorable experiences rather than merely selling products or services (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). This concept is applied in various contexts, including pop-up events, immersive retail environments, experiential tourism, theme parks, and virtual reality, all aimed at fostering emotional engagement with customers (MasterClass, 2022). These principles are also applicable to large religious events, where meticulous planning can significantly enhance the experiences of participants while prioritizing safety and sustainability. (Masterclass, 2022)

Crowd Management and Accessibility

Strategic crowd management is essential for large religious gatherings such as the Kumbh Mela. Karthika et al. (2022) introduced a framework based on walk accessibility, indicating that pilgrims favour direct paths with fewer turns and that trip-chaining behavior affects their movement patterns. Optimizing routes and mapping accessibility can improve both safety and the flow of attendees. (P S Karthika, 2022)

Sanitation and Public Health

Sanitation poses a significant challenge at mass gatherings. Baranwal et al. (2013) reported that while health services during the Maha Kumbh 2013 were satisfactory, issues such as inadequate drainage, overcrowded restrooms, and the absence of gender-segregated facilities presented health risks. Investing in advanced sanitation technologies could enhance hygiene and public health outcomes. (1School of Habitat Studies, 2015)

Economic and Infrastructure Impact

Mega events contribute to economic development through infrastructure investments and tourism. Mausom et al. (2020) observed that the Allahabad Kumbh attracts more investment compared to the Nasik Kumbh, resulting in long-term urban enhancements. However, Ojha & Rao (2021) caution that temporary infrastructure often lacks sustainability. It is crucial to balance the immediate needs of events with the requirements of long-term urban planning. (Mayank Mousam)

4. Observation and Discussion

Our Unforgettable Journey to Mahakumbh 2025

As the year 2025 began, we embarked on an extraordinary journey to one of the most sacred and grandest gatherings in the world—Mahakumbh in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh. This event, held after 144 years, was something we simply couldn't miss!

Discovering Mahakumbh & Planning the Trip

Our first glimpse of Mahakumbh came through social media, where we saw breathtaking visuals of the event. One of our friends, Suraj, was already familiar with the spiritual significance of Mahakumbh, and his stories only fueled our excitement. With determination, we finalized January 22 as our travel date. Since train travel was the most convenient and budget-friendly option, we booked our tickets despite the heavy rush. Thanks to Suraj's knowledge of train schedules, we managed to secure tickets, though in multiple legs.

On the morning of January 22, we boarded the Kamayani Express at 6:00 AM from Lokmanya Tilak Terminus (LTT) bound for Itarsi. Initially, the train had a moderate crowd, but after crossing Kalyan, the number of passengers significantly increased. By the time we reached Itarsi, the train was fully packed. Here, we had our first challenge as some passengers rudely asked us to vacate our seats. With no other option, we stood near the door throughout the journey to Satna, as we had only current tickets without reservations. The train remained overcrowded, making the journey physically exhausting.

Upon reaching Satna, luck was on our side, and we managed to book three-tier AC tickets for the next stretch to Jabalpur. The experience was drastically different—comfortable seats, ample space, and all amenities available, allowing us to relax for a while. However, this comfort was short-lived as we transitioned back to a sleeper coach for the final stretch from Jabalpur to Prayagraj. Once again, the train was jam-packed, leaving us to sit in the middle of the berths. Sleep was a luxury we couldn't afford that night.

By 4:30 AM, we finally reached Prayagraj, exhausted but filled with anticipation. Despite the challenges, the journey itself was an adventure, and we enjoyed every moment of it. Taking an auto to Civil Lines, our first stop was a small tea stall, where we enjoyed a warm cup of tea, a much-needed relief in the freezing cold.

4.1 Railway Transportation at Maha Kumbh 2025: A Pillar of the Experience Economy

Our journey gave us a firsthand experience of how crucial railway transportation was for Maha Kumbh 2025. With millions of devotees pouring into Prayagraj, Indian Railways played a pivotal role in making travel smooth. Over 1,000 special trains were introduced, platforms were expanded, and extra booking counters were set up to accommodate the surge in travelers. We were surprised at how efficiently Tatkal tickets were managed, as we managed to book them just two days before departure without any major issues.

Security was noticeably tight, with over 10,000 personnel deployed, AI-based crowd monitoring, and CCTV surveillance ensuring safety. Stations were well-equipped with new Foot Over Bridges (FOBs), escalators, and digital signboards that helped passengers navigate easily. The waiting halls were upgraded, food kiosks were readily available, and real-time train tracking made travel much more convenient.

We also noticed the level of emergency preparedness. Quick Response Teams (QRTs), medical coaches, and fire safety measures were in place to handle any crisis. These arrangements reassured us, allowing us to focus entirely on our spiritual journey.

The seamless railway connectivity not only helped millions reach Mahakumbh but also enhanced the overall experience, making it smoother and more memorable. Our journey was a blend of adventure, devotion, and appreciation for the incredible efforts taken to manage such a massive event. (DELHI, 2025)

Stepping into the Divine Gathering

As soon as we stepped outside the station, we were surrounded by a sea of people, all filled with excitement. The city was glowing with beautiful lights, energetic crowds, and a festive spirit that was hard to describe in words. The security arrangements were top-notch, with police personnel, CCTV cameras, and clear directions guiding visitors.

4.2 Role of safety in enhancing spiritual experience

The Uttar Pradesh government had implemented a seven-tier security system, ensuring safety for millions of devotees. With an allocated budget of ₹131.48 crore, the Maha Kumbh 2025 security measures included 351 firefighting vehicles, 50 fire stations, Tents with fire fighting equipment. AI-based crowd monitoring, 57 police stations (including 13 temporary ones), and an extensive Lost & Found network ensured smooth crowd management. For river safety, 3,800 Water Police personnel, underwater drones, and barricades were in place to make the holy dip at Triveni Sangam a secure experience. Drones, digital surveillance, and social media tracking played a vital role in ensuring safety and efficiency. (Culture, 2025)

Table 3: Security Provisions for the Maha Kumbh

| Aspect | Details |
|------------------------|--|
| Fire Safety Budget | ₹131.48 crore |
| Fire Stations | 50 |
| Firefighting Vehicles | 351 |
| Police Stations | 57 (13 temporary, 44 permanent) |
| Water Police Personnel | 3,800 |
| River Safety Measures | Underwater drones, barricades |
| Digital Security | AI-based monitoring, drones |
| Lost & Found Support | Digital tracking, social media (Culture, 2025) |

Maha Kumbh 2025 was not just a spiritual gathering; it was a perfect example of how faith and the experience economy intersect. It showcased how religious tourism could be enhanced through advanced infrastructure, technology, and seamless security management. The Uttar Pradesh government successfully set a new benchmark in organizing large-scale religious gatherings, making it an event where tradition met modernity in the best possible way.

We quickly found transport to Civil Lines, where we stopped for a warm cup of tea to battle the freezing cold. After walking for nearly two hours, we realized that hotels were well beyond our

budget. That's when we decided to embrace the traditional tent accommodations, an experience that only added to the magic of Mahakumbh. However, finding a tent wasn't as easy as we had imagined

4.3 Accommodation Management at Maha Kumbh 2025: Enhancing the Experience Economy

Accommodation for the Maha Kumbh 2025 was carefully organized to handle the massive influx of devotees. The Uttar Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation (UPSTDC) established a deluxe dormitory with 300 beds in the Kumbh area, featuring 50 tents outfitted with modern conveniences like air conditioning, geysers, Wi-Fi, and mosquito nets. These high-end tents provided a comfortable retreat for those seeking ease amidst the spiritual fervor. For those desiring a more opulent experience, dome-shaped cottages with stunning views were made available, accommodating two guests at a starting price of ₹61,000, with peak rates soaring to ₹81,000.

Private enterprises also contributed to the accommodation options, offering semi-deluxe, deluxe, and luxury tents along the banks of the Ganga. These tents came with private verandas, bathrooms, and sattvik meals, appealing to pilgrims who wanted to blend spirituality with comfort.

The scale of the accommodation was remarkable—spanning 4,000 hectares, the tent city featured nearly 200,000 tents, connected by 250 miles of roads and 30 pontoon bridges. The Akhadas, the religious sects overseeing the event, ensured that budget-friendly tents were accessible for devotees. Priced between ₹1,000 and ₹3,000 per night, these tents allowed followers to remain close to their spiritual leaders while immersing themselves in the true essence of Mahakumbh.

As students, we found deluxe accommodations to be financially unfeasible. Instead, we chose a basic tent arranged by an Akhada. Initially listed at ₹1,600 for a 12-hour stay, we successfully negotiated the price down to ₹800, making our experience both affordable and comfortable. This arrangement not only provided us with a place to rest but also deepened our connection to the festival's spirit, allowing us to witness the devotion and discipline that characterize Mahakumbh. (TIMES, 2024) (DESK, 2025) (Behal, 2025)

The Heart of Mahakumbh

As we made our way deeper into the event, the chants of "Har Har Gange" echoed all around us. Thousands of people, from young children to elderly devotees, moved together in devotion, their faces glowing with faith and excitement. The streets were lined with food stalls, tea vendors, and even horse-drawn carriages offering rides. The scent of freshly fried samosas filled the air, tempting us to stop at a busy junction and enjoy the crispy, piping-hot snack, a perfect companion in the chilly weather.

The true essence of Mahakumbh lay not just in its spiritual significance but in the way it seamlessly blended tradition with modern advancements. As we walked through the crowded streets, we noticed how efficiently the event was managed—from security to cleanliness and food arrangements, everything was planned to enhance the experience of millions of devotees.

The Holy Ritual & Unforgettable Moments

To truly complete our Mahakumbh experience, we followed tradition and left for Triveni Sangam early in the morning. Along the way, we were amazed by the neatly arranged food stalls and the well-organized waste management system. Various institutes had set up food distribution points to serve meals to the devotees. The drinking water supply was equally well-managed, ensuring that every pilgrim had access to clean and safe water. The basic Infrastructure facilities were also great. The meticulous planning behind these arrangements was evident, making our spiritual journey smooth and hassle-free.

4.4 Cleanliness and Sanitation: A Key Pillar of Mahakumbh Experience

The Swachh Maha Kumbh Abhiyan played a crucial role in maintaining a clean and hygienic environment for millions of devotees. Over 10,200 sanitation workers and 1,800 Ganga Sevaduts worked tirelessly to keep the festival grounds spotless, while 22,000 waste management workers ensured that garbage was promptly collected and processed. A strict plastic ban and the use of biodegradable alternatives helped reduce pollution.

During major bathing days, Quick Response Teams and special vehicles were deployed to keep the ghats and fairgrounds clean. Advanced sanitation facilities, including thousands of toilets and urinals, were installed to maintain hygiene. Public participation was also encouraged through awareness drives and cultural events, reinforcing the message of cleanliness and sustainability. The extensive efforts put into cleanliness made Mahakumbh 2025 a model for large-scale event management. (DELHI, 2025)

4.5 Supply Chain Management of Food at Mahakumbh 2025

Managing food for millions of pilgrims required a well-coordinated system, integrating traditional community dining with modern technology. Mega kitchens and Akhadas played a crucial role in food distribution, ensuring that every pilgrim was well-fed while preserving the spiritual essence of the event. While mega kitchens used automation for efficiency, Akhadas maintained their tradition of serving meals through bhandaras, where devotees sat in rows and were served simple yet nourishing meals like khichdi, roti, and dal.

Table 4: Mega Kitchens of Maha Kumbh. A brief illustration of kitchen capacities organised by major religious organisation

| Kitchen/Camp | Location | Daily Meal Capacity | Key Features |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| ISKCON Mega Kitchen | Sector 19, Prayagraj | 1.5 lakh meals/day | 40,000 rotis/hour, mini rail track for logistics |
| Akshaya Patra Camp | Sector 6, Tent City | 20,000 meals/day | Automated machines for cooking & processing |
| Lal Mahendra Shivshakti Ashram | Parade Ground | 24/7 Prasad Distribution | 40 quintals of potato curry per batch |
| Akhadas (Various Sects) | Throughout Mahakumbh Grounds | Varies | Traditional cooking, community dining |

Source (Jamooji, 2025) (Kumar, 2025)

The ISKCON Mega Kitchen used automated roti-making machines capable of producing 40,000 rotis per hour and employed a mini rail system for efficient logistics. Akshaya Patra prepared thousands of meals daily using industrial machines that processed 350 kg of rice, 750 liters of pulses, 350 kg of vegetables, and 2,000 rotis per hour. Lal Mahendra Shivshakti Seva

Samiti ensured 24/7 prasad distribution, preparing massive batches of food continuously. (Jamooji, 2025) (Kumar, 2025)

4.6 Mahakumbh 2025: Transformed Pilgrim Experience with 24/7 Pure Drinking Water Supply

Water supply was another major challenge efficiently managed at Mahakumbh 2025. The installation of 233 Water ATMs provided 24/7 access to pure drinking water, benefiting over 40 lakh pilgrims between January 21 and February 1, 2025. Initially, these ATMs charged ₹1 per liter, but later, the administration made the service free, reinforcing the inclusive spirit of Mahakumbh. Each ATM dispensed 12,000-15,000 liters of RO water daily.

Table 5: Data Summary of Drinking Water Management

| Aspect | Details |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Total Water ATMs | 233 |
| Operational Hours | 24/7 |
| Pilgrims Benefited (Jan 21 - Feb 1, 2025) | 40 lakh |
| Daily Supply per ATM | 12,000 - 15,000 liters |
| Initial Cost per Liter | ₹1 per liter |
| Current Cost per Liter | Free |
| Payment Modes (Initially) | Coins, UPI |
| Technology Used | Sensor-based monitoring, SIM network |
| Environmental Impact | Reduced plastic waste |
| Future Plans | Expansion to future events |

The water supply system not only ensured convenience but also promoted sustainability by encouraging pilgrims to use reusable bottles, significantly reducing plastic waste. Given its success, similar models are now being considered for future religious events. (DELHI, 2025) (Bureau, 2025)

4.7 Transforming Maha Kumbh 2025: Infrastructure Development for a Seamless Experience

Expanding Road Networks and Bridges

A well-connected transportation network was essential to managing the movement of people efficiently during Maha Kumbh. To facilitate easy access, 92 roads were renovated, and 17 major roads underwent beautification to enhance the city's appeal. Additionally, 30 pontoon bridges were constructed using 3,308 pontoons, allowing smooth movement across the river and different zones of Maha Kumbh. These efforts ensured that devotees could navigate the vast Kumbh area without congestion, reducing travel time and improving their overall experience.

From personal experience, the pontoon bridges were impressively strong, capable of supporting even fully loaded trucks with ease. Their durability and stability played a crucial role in managing the massive crowds, allowing people to move efficiently from one place to another without delays or safety concerns. These bridges became an essential part of the transportation network, ensuring smooth and uninterrupted movement throughout the event.

Smart Navigation with Multi-Language Signage

Given the diverse crowd from across India and the world, proper navigation was crucial. A total of 800 signages in multiple languages—Hindi, English, and regional languages—were installed throughout the Kumbh area. These signboards helped visitors find important locations such as bathing ghats, medical centers, and accommodation zones. By reducing confusion and making movement hassle-free, these navigation aids significantly improved the overall experience of the pilgrims.

This use of multilingual signages demonstrates how infrastructure can enhance accessibility and inclusivity in large-scale events. It allowed both domestic and international visitors to explore the Kumbh without language barriers, making it a truly global event. (DELHI, 2025) In order to reach Triveni Sangam we need to travel through water so we inquired about boat fares at the Sangam, which were initially quoted at ₹2000 but, after bargaining, we managed to get a ride for ₹400.

At Triveni Sangam, where the Ganga, Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati meet, we took our holy dip, an experience that felt truly divine. After our sacred bath, we collected holy water to bring back home.

Following the tradition, we visited the Hanuman Temple after our dip, which is considered essential for spiritual completion. Waiting in long queues didn't feel tiresome as the collective devotion kept the spirits high. The temple was packed with devotees, but the energy of the place was mesmerizing.

As the day turned to evening, we returned to our tents, had a light meal, and prepared for our departure at 8:00 PM. Before leaving, the tent owners even offered us prasad, a gesture that truly touched us. While Shardul and Suraj enjoyed a meal together, I (Prince) had food separately, as the meal contained onion and garlic, which I wanted to avoid.

A Journey to Remember

As we bid farewell to Mahakumbh, our hearts were full, and our souls enriched. The journey had been challenging yet rewarding in every sense. The seamless railway transportation, security arrangements, and hospitality of the locals made the experience unforgettable. This wasn't just a trip—it was a spiritual awakening, a glimpse into a tradition that has been alive for centuries. Until next time, Mahakumbh!

4.8 The Experiential Economy at Maha Kumbh Mela 2025: A Catalyst for Revenue, Employment, and Growth

The Maha Kumbh Mela is not just a religious gathering; it is a massive economic phenomenon that showcases the power of the experiential economy. Scheduled from January 13 to February 26, 2025, in Prayagraj, this event is expected to attract over 400 million visitors, generating an estimated financial impact of ₹2.5 lakh crore. This research paper explores how Maha Kumbh 2025 influences various sectors and strengthens India's economy through tourism, employment, retail, and infrastructure development.

The Economic Scale of Maha Kumbh Mela 2025

Maha Kumbh Mela's impact on the economy has been growing exponentially over the years. The table below highlights the transformation of the festival's economic contribution:

Table 6: A comparative chart of revenue generation through Kumbh Mela's

| Aspect | 2013 (Puru Kumbh) | 2019 (Ardh Kumbh) | 2025 (Maha Kumbh) |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Tourist Arrival (Crore) | 8 | 24 | 40-45 |
| Budget Allocation (₹ Crore) | 1,300 | 3,700 | 6,400 |
| Financial Transactions (₹ Crore) | 12,000 | 1,20,000 | 2,50,000 |
| % of India's GDP Contribution | 0.12% | 0.63% | 0.77% |

The economic impact of Maha Kumbh has surged dramatically, contributing nearly 0.8% to India's GDP. This exemplifies how cultural and spiritual events act as economic engines, driving growth across multiple industries. (DESK U. N., Upstox, 2025)

Tourism and Hospitality: A Major Beneficiary

Tourism is at the heart of the Maha Kumbh Mela's economic success. Over a million international visitors are expected to attend, boosting the hospitality sector significantly.

Infrastructure Investment: The government has allocated ₹5,000 crore for improving roads, railways, and airports, which will generate an estimated ₹40,000 crore in revenue.

Accommodation Boom: Hotels, lodges, and temporary shelters are witnessing skyrocketing demand. Super-luxury tents priced at ₹1 lakh per night are already sold out, while dorms charge between ₹1,500 and ₹35,000 per night.

Revenue Generation: Hotels and lodges are expected to earn ₹15,000 crore, while temporary tent accommodations will add another ₹10,000 crore to the economy.

Employment Opportunities: A Job Creation Hub

The Maha Kumbh Mela acts as a massive employment generator, creating direct and indirect job opportunities across multiple sectors.

Table 7: The table highlights the estimated job creation for Maha Kumbh 2025 across key sectors

| Sector | Estimated Jobs Created (2025) |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Tourism and Hospitality | 300,000 |
| Transport Services | 150,000 |
| Retail and Food Vendors | 200,000 |
| Event Management & Security | 150,000 |
| Total | 800,000+ |

The experiential economy at Maha Kumbh is not just about the religious experience but also about the employment it generates, supporting millions of families and businesses. (TEAM, 2025)

Retail and Consumer Goods: A Surge in Demand

With millions of visitors attending the festival, the demand for daily necessities and spiritual goods reaches unprecedented levels.

Essential Commodities: Groceries, milk products, and edible oils are expected to generate ₹20,000 crore in turnover.

Handicrafts and Religious Items: Sales of religious artifacts and souvenirs will contribute another ₹25,000 crore, benefiting artisans and small-scale industries.

The experiential economy plays a crucial role here, as people seek tangible products that remind them of their spiritual journey, further fueling business growth.

Transportation: The Backbone of Kumbh Mela

Transportation is another key pillar supporting the economic framework of Maha Kumbh.

Table 8: Revenue Generated through Transportation

| Transport Mode | Revenue Generation (₹ Crore) |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Special Trains (1000+) | 20,000 |
| Bus Services & Private Vehicles | 12,000 |
| Ride-Hailing & Local Transport | 4,000 |
| Helicopter Rides | 157 |

With 1,000+ special trains, enhanced bus services, and new offerings like helicopter rides, the event provides seamless connectivity while generating massive revenues. (TEAM, 2025)

Infrastructure Development: A Long-Term Investment

Hosting such a grand event requires substantial investment in infrastructure, ensuring long-term benefits for the region.

Government Investment: ₹6,400 crore allocated for roads, sanitation, security, and public facilities.

Legacy Impact: The improved infrastructure will continue benefiting residents and tourists long after the festival concludes, positioning Prayagraj as a prime spiritual tourism destination.

Branding and Marketing: A Golden Opportunity for Businesses

Corporations leverage the Maha Kumbh Mela to enhance brand visibility. In 2019, corporate sponsorships and advertisements amounted to ₹2,000 crore. In 2025, this figure is expected to exceed ₹3,000 crore, as brands from FMCG, banking, and telecom sectors target the massive audience.

(NANDI, 2025) (DESK U. N., Upstox, 2025) (TEAM, 2025)

Conclusion

The Maha Kumbh Mela is more than just a significant spiritual event; it also serves as a vital economic catalyst. While its main focus is on religious devotion and spiritual enlightenment, the festival plays an essential role in enhancing the economy. It brings in considerable revenue through tourism, supports local businesses, creates job opportunities, and encourages infrastructure growth. The high demand for lodging, transportation, food, and cultural products stimulates economic activity, benefiting both small vendors and larger enterprises. Furthermore, the influx of international visitors boosts foreign exchange earnings and elevates India's cultural heritage on a global scale. Therefore, the Maha Kumbh is not only a spiritual gathering but also a vibrant economic powerhouse that greatly contributes to both regional and national development.

The Government received praise from International media for their excellent management of Maha Kumbh. The Wall Street Journal highlighted Maha Kumbh Mela as hosting more pilgrims than the U.S. population, with nearly half a billion attendees. The Huffington Post called it the world's largest pilgrimage, while The New York Times described it as a sacred event drawing devotees, tourists, politicians, and celebrities globally.

(DESK H. N., Hindustan Times, 2025)

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