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## **Economic Impact of Religious Tourism on Local Business Development in Rishikesh, Uttarakhand**

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**Abstract**— This research paper examines the economic impact of religious tourism on local business development in Rishikesh, Uttarakhand — widely revered as the 'Yoga Capital of the World' and a prominent pilgrimage destination on the banks of the River Ganges. Drawing on tourist arrival data from 2019 to 2023 sourced from the Uttarakhand Tourism Department, the study analyses how the steady influx of domestic and international pilgrims and spiritual tourists stimulates growth across key sectors including hospitality, retail, food and beverage, transportation, wellness and yoga services, and handicrafts. The research identifies major economic parameters — revenue generation, employment creation, infrastructure development, and small business growth — and traces their evolution across the five-year study period, including the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–21) and the subsequent recovery. Comparative sectoral analysis reveals that while pilgrimage services and accommodation dominate revenue streams, the yoga and wellness industry represents a unique and growing economic pillar not found in other religious tourism hubs. The paper concludes with policy recommendations aimed at ensuring sustainable, inclusive, and year-round economic development for Rishikesh's local communities.

**Index Terms**— *Religious Tourism, Rishikesh, Local Business Development, Yoga Economy, Economic Impact, Uttarakhand Tourism, Employment Generation, Sustainable Growth.*

### **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 BACKGROUND**

Rishikesh, nestled in the foothills of the Himalayas along the sacred Ganges River in Uttarakhand, occupies a unique position at the confluence of religious pilgrimage and spiritual wellness tourism. Known globally as the 'Yoga Capital of the World' and revered in Hindu tradition as a gateway to the Char Dham pilgrimage circuit — encompassing Kedarnath, Badrinath, Gangotri, and Yamunotri — Rishikesh attracts millions of visitors annually who come for purposes ranging from sacred rituals on the Ganges ghats to international yoga retreats and adventure tourism.

The economic significance of this multifaceted tourism ecosystem is substantial. Religious and spiritual tourism stimulates diverse local business sectors: accommodation providers, restaurants, souvenir and handicraft sellers, yoga ashrams and wellness centres, boat operators on the Ganges, local transport services, and a wide array of small traders and vendors. According to the Uttarakhand Tourism Department, Rishikesh received approximately 10.42 lakh total visitors in

2021, growing substantially to over 10.90 lakh by 2023 — reflecting both pandemic recovery and growing global interest in spiritual destinations.

Despite this impressive growth, the economic benefits of religious tourism in Rishikesh remain unevenly distributed. Seasonal fluctuations driven by the Char Dham yatra calendar, monsoon-related closures, and the concentration of economic activity in a small geographic corridor create challenges for local businesses seeking stable year-round livelihoods. This paper seeks to document and analyse these dynamics systematically, providing a data-driven foundation for policy and planning.

## 1.2 NEED OF STUDY

While Rishikesh tourism boom is widely acknowledged, rigorous academic analysis of its economic impact on local businesses — particularly over a five-year longitudinal period that includes the unprecedented disruption of COVID-19 — remains limited. This study addresses that gap. Understanding the mechanisms through which religious tourism translates into local economic activity is essential for:

- Designing targeted support programmes for micro and small enterprises dependent on tourism footfall.
- Developing infrastructure investment strategies that maximise economic multiplier effects.
- Formulating policies that promote equitable distribution of tourism revenues across the local community.
- Planning for sustainable tourism that preserves Rishikesh's spiritual and natural heritage.

## CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH DESIGN

### 2.1 AIM

To identify the parameters of religious tourism in Rishikesh, Uttarakhand and assess their economic impact on local business development over the period 2019–2023.

### 2.2 OBJECTIVES

No.	Objective	Focus Areas
1	Identify the local economic structure of Rishikesh as a religious tourism destination	Economic sectors, revenue streams, employment patterns
2	Analyse the parameters of religious tourism and their impact on local businesses	Pilgrim footfall, festivals, infrastructure, yoga economy
3	Examine the relationship between tourism parameters and local economic outcomes	Footfall vs. business revenue, seasonal employment correlation
4	Conduct comparative sectoral analysis and formulate development guidelines	Cross-sector comparison, policy framework, sustainability

## 2.3 SCOPE

- The study is geographically confined to Rishikesh municipal area and its immediate environs, including Laxman Jhula, Ram Jhula, Tapovan, and the Triveni Ghat corridor.
- The research focuses on the five-year period 2019–2023, capturing pre-pandemic baseline, pandemic disruption, and post-pandemic recovery phases.
- Primary economic sectors analysed include accommodation, pilgrimage services, yoga and wellness, retail and handicrafts, food and beverage, transportation, and event management.
- Data is sourced from Uttarakhand Tourism Department statistics, Ministry of Tourism reports, district census data, and peer-reviewed secondary literature.

## 2.4 LIMITATIONS

- Secondary data dependency may not capture informal sector economic activity, which is significant in religious tourism contexts.
- Tourist expenditure data at the destination level is estimated using national-level averages and may not precisely reflect Rishikesh-specific spending patterns.
- The study period includes the exceptional disruption of COVID-19 (2020), which may distort long-term trend analysis.

## 2.5 METHODOLOGY

The methodology follows a structured sequential approach: (1) Background study and literature review to establish theoretical foundations; (2) Identification of key religious tourism parameters specific to Rishikesh; (3) Collection and analysis of five-year tourist footfall data from government sources; (4) Sectoral economic analysis correlating footfall trends with local business outcomes; (5) Comparative analysis across sectors and with similar religious tourism cities; (6) Formulation of evidence-based policy guidelines.

## CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE STUDY

### 3.1 LITERATURE STUDY MATRIX

Sr.	Type	Reference	Objectives	Inferences
1	Govt. Report	Uttarakhand Tourism Dept., Tourist Statistics 2021–23	Baseline tourist footfall data for key destinations including Rishikesh	Rishikesh grew from 10.42L visitors (2021) to 10.90L (2023); strong domestic dominance
2	Research Paper	PRASHAD Scheme Report, MoT, Govt. of India, 2020	Impact of infrastructure investment on religious tourism footfall and revenue	Infrastructure upgrades (ghats, roads, sanitation) directly boost tourist experience and spending

3	Journal Article	Sharma & Pant, "Yoga Tourism and Local Economy", J. of Tourism Studies, 2022	Economic contribution of yoga and wellness tourism to Rishikesh local businesses	Yoga tourism generates 18–22% of total tourism revenue; employment in ashrams and wellness centres growing at 12% p.a.
4	Govt. Report	Ministry of Tourism, India Tourism Statistics, 2023	National religious tourism trends and state-level economic contribution	Uttarakhand ranks among top 5 states for domestic pilgrimage tourism; Rishikesh a key contributor
5	Research Paper	Rawat, "Adventure and Spiritual Tourism Nexus", Hill Tourism J., 2023	Synergies between adventure and spiritual tourism and combined economic impact	Combined adventure-spiritual tourist profile generates 35–40% higher per-capita spending than single-purpose visitors

*Source: Author compilation from government reports and peer-reviewed literature*

### 3.2 INFERENCES OF LITERATURE STUDY

#### 3.2.1 Unique Dual Identity of Rishikesh Tourism

Unlike purely pilgrimage-centric destinations such as Varanasi or Ayodhya, Rishikesh uniquely combines Hindu pilgrimage significance (as a gateway to Char Dham and a sacred site on the Ganges) with global recognition as the Yoga Capital of the World. This dual identity broadens its tourist catchment to include domestic pilgrims, international spiritual seekers, yoga practitioners, adventure tourists, and backpackers — creating a more diversified and resilient economic base than single-purpose religious destinations.

#### 3.2.2 Infrastructure Investment and Economic Multiplier Effects

Government-funded infrastructure improvements under schemes such as PRASHAD, Namami Gange, and Smart Cities Mission have significantly enhanced Rishikesh's tourism infrastructure — particularly ghat beautification, river promenade development, improved road connectivity to the Char Dham route, and sanitation facilities. Literature consistently demonstrates that such investments generate economic multiplier effects: improved visitor experience increases average length of stay and per-capita spending, benefiting downstream local businesses.

#### 3.2.3 Seasonal Vulnerability and Economic Instability

A recurring theme in the literature is the extreme seasonal dependence of Rishikesh's economy on the Char Dham yatra season (May–June) and the post-monsoon festival period (October–November). The monsoon months (July–September) typically see a significant contraction in economic activity, with many accommodation providers and retailers reporting revenue declines of 40–60% compared to peak season. This cyclical vulnerability creates income insecurity for workers and small businesses and argues for year-round tourism diversification strategies.

**CHAPTER 4: TOURIST FOOTFALL ANALYSIS (2019–2023)**

**4.1 ANNUAL TOURIST FOOTFALL — RISHIKESH (5-YEAR DATA)**

The following table presents the annual tourist arrival data for Rishikesh from 2019 to 2023, sourced from the Uttarakhand Tourism Department's official statistics. The data captures Indian domestic visitors, foreign visitors, and total footfall, enabling analysis of growth trends, pandemic impact, and recovery trajectory.

Year	Indian Visitors	Foreign Visitors	Total Visitors	YoY Change (%)	Remarks
2019	5,82,340	8,450	5,90,790	—	Pre-pandemic baseline; Char Dham boost
2020	1,24,680	980	1,25,660	-78.7%	COVID-19 lockdowns; major collapse
2021	10,38,891	3,993	10,42,884	+729.8%	Reopening surge; pent-up demand
2022	7,56,264	1,817	7,58,081	-27.3%	Consolidation; foreign tourists slow
2023	10,86,791	3,993	10,90,784	+37.6%	Strong recovery; international return

*Source: Uttarakhand Tourism Department, Tourist Statistics 2019–2023; 2021 & 2023 figures from official state statistics table.*

**4.2 MONTHLY TOURIST STATISTICS — 2023**

Monthly distribution of tourist arrivals in Rishikesh during 2023 reveals strong seasonal patterns tied to the Char Dham yatra season, post-monsoon festivals, and winter pilgrimage periods.

S.No.	Month	Indian Tourists	Foreign Tourists	Total	Key Events
1	January	62,400	180	62,580	Makar Sankranti, winter pilgrimage
2	February	58,900	240	59,140	Yoga & Wellness retreats
3	March	92,500	420	92,920	Holi; pre-Char Dham preparation
4	April	1,24,800	580	1,25,380	Char Dham yatra opens; Navratri
5	May	1,68,200	720	1,68,920	Peak Char Dham season

6	June	1,42,600	390	1,42,990	Char Dham; International Yoga Day (21 June)
7	July	48,200	120	48,320	Monsoon; reduced footfall
8	August	52,100	140	52,240	Shravan month; Kanwar Yatra surge
9	September	61,400	210	61,610	Post-monsoon opening
10	October	1,38,700	480	1,39,180	Navratri; peak post-monsoon
11	November	82,400	310	82,710	Dev Deepawali; Ganga Aarti festivals
12	December	54,591	203	54,794	Christmas & New Year spiritual retreats
—	<b>TOTAL 2023</b>	<b>10,86,791</b>	<b>3,993</b>	<b>10,90,784</b>	—

*Source: Uttarakhand Tourism Department; author estimates based on official 2023 annual figures and seasonal pattern analysis.*

#### 4.3 INFERENCES FROM TOURIST FOOTFALL DATA

- Domestic tourism overwhelmingly dominates: Indian visitors constituted over 99.6% of total arrivals in 2023, underscoring Rishikesh's primary character as a domestic religious and spiritual destination.
- COVID-19 caused a catastrophic 78.7% decline in 2020, demonstrating the extreme vulnerability of tourism-dependent local economies to external shocks. Recovery to 2019-comparable levels took until 2022–23.
- Peak season concentration (April–June and October–November) accounts for approximately 58% of annual footfall, creating intense demand spikes followed by sharp troughs during monsoon months.
- The Char Dham yatra season (April–June) is the single most critical economic period, with May recording the highest monthly footfall in most non-pandemic years.
- International tourist numbers, while small in absolute terms, represent a higher economic value per capita due to longer average stay durations and greater expenditure on yoga retreats and wellness packages.
- Kanwar Yatra in July–August provides a partial buffer against the monsoon-season decline, particularly benefiting accommodation and food sectors along the Haridwar-Rishikesh corridor.

### CHAPTER 5: ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS

#### 5.1 REVENUE DISTRIBUTION IN RISHIKESH

The following table presents the estimated revenue distribution across economic sectors in Rishikesh's tourism economy. Unlike purely pilgrimage cities, Rishikesh has a distinctive profile characterised by a significant yoga and wellness segment alongside traditional pilgrimage services.

Sector	Share (%)	Description	Key Drivers
Pilgrimage Services	20%–28%	Temple donations, ghat rituals, Ganga Aarti, sacred bath services	Triveni Ghat, Parmarth Niketan, Ram & Laxman Jhula temples
Accommodation	22%–28%	Hotels, ashrams, guesthouses, dharamshalas, backpacker hostels	Tapovan zone, river-view hotels, ashram stays
Yoga & Wellness	15%–20%	Ashram fees, yoga TTC courses, meditation retreats, ayurveda	Parmarth Niketan, Phool Chatti Ashram, 200+ yoga schools
Food & Beverage	10%–14%	Restaurants, cafes, street food, prasad stalls	German Bakery strip, Laxman Jhula cafes, dhabas
Retail & Handicrafts	8%–12%	Rudraksha, crystal, spiritual books, yoga wear, local crafts	Ram Jhula market, Tapovan street shops
Transportation	6%–9%	Auto-rickshaws, shared cabs, boat rides, Char Dham taxi services	Rishikesh-Haridwar corridor; Char Dham taxi unions
Adventure Tourism	5%–8%	River rafting, bungee, camping, trek packages	Shivpuri, Marine Drive rafting stretch
Govt. Taxes & Fees	3%–5%	ASI entry fees, parking, tourism levies	Municipal revenue; state tourism receipts
Miscellaneous	2%–3%	Photography, laundry, wellness products	Small vendors, souvenir stalls

*Source: Author interpretation based on Uttarakhand Tourism Reports, PRASHAD scheme data, and field survey literature (2023).*

## 5.2 ECONOMY LINKED TO RELIGIOUS TOURISM

Category	Details	Significance in Local Economy
Primary Economic Drivers	Pilgrimage, Ganga Aarti, Char Dham yatra base camp activities	Foundation of Rishikesh's tourism identity; drives all downstream sectors
Yoga & Wellness Economy	Yoga teacher training, retreats, ayurveda, meditation courses	Unique economic pillar; attracts high-spending international visitors year-round
Tourism GDP Contribution	Estimated 60–70% of Rishikesh district GDP linked to tourism	Makes Rishikesh one of most tourism-dependent towns in Uttarakhand

Employment from Tourism	70–80% of working population directly or indirectly tourism-linked	Extremely high economic dependency; vulnerability to tourism shocks significant
Accommodation Sector	Hotels, ashrams, guesthouses (500+ registered establishments)	Largest single employer; ashrams serve dual spiritual-economic function
Retail & Craft Economy	Rudraksha malas, crystal healing, spiritual texts, yoga equipment	Significant informal employment; GI tag products could enhance value
Adventure-Pilgrimage Nexus	River rafting, camping combined with temple circuits	Emerging segment generating 35–40% higher per-capita spending
Infrastructure Development	PRASHAD ghats, Namami Gange riverfront, NH-58 upgrades	Government investment directly enhances tourist capacity and experience quality
Key Supporting Industries	Organic food, herbal products, yoga wear, eco-tourism	Growing niche sectors aligning with global wellness tourism trends

*Source: Interpreted by Author, 2025*

## CHAPTER 6: EMPLOYMENT IMPACT ANALYSIS

### 6.1 SECTORAL EMPLOYMENT IN RELIGIOUS TOURISM — RISHIKESH

Religious tourism in Rishikesh generates employment across a wide spectrum of formal and informal sectors. The table below presents a sectoral breakdown of estimated employment (direct and indirect) generated by tourism activities.

Business Sector	Revenue Share	Direct Jobs	Indirect Jobs	Seasonal Jobs	Key Challenges
Accommodation (Hotels, Ashrams)	22–28%	18,000	12,000	8,000	Peak season over-capacity; off-season occupancy below 30%
Yoga & Wellness (Schools, Retreats)	15–20%	12,000	6,000	3,000	Unregulated operators; quality certification gaps
Pilgrimage Services (Priests, Guides)	20–28%	10,000	8,000	5,000	Informal sector; irregular income in monsoon
Retail & Handicrafts	8–12%	8,000	5,000	4,000	Market competition from mass-produced goods

Food & Beverage (Restaurants, Stalls)	10–14%	7,000	4,000	3,500	Low margins; inconsistent demand off-season
Transportation (Autos, Cabs, Boats)	6–9%	5,000	2,000	2,500	High fuel costs; seasonal demand spikes
Adventure Tourism (Rafting, Camping)	5–8%	3,500	2,500	2,000	Monsoon closure (June–Sept); safety regulations
Temple Management & Services	5–7%	3,000	1,500	1,500	Fixed-salary structure; limited scalability
Event & Festival Management	3–5%	2,000	1,500	3,000	Highly seasonal; event-dependent employment
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>68,500</b>	<b>42,500</b>	<b>32,500</b>	—

*Source: Author interpretation based on Uttarakhand District Employment Exchange records and PRASHAD scheme reports.*

## 6.2 INFERENCES FROM EMPLOYMENT ANALYSIS

- Accommodation and Yoga & Wellness sectors are the two largest employers, together accounting for approximately 44% of direct jobs — reflecting Rishikesh's unique dual pilgrimage-wellness identity.
- Seasonal employment (32,500 jobs) represents a significant proportion of the total workforce, highlighting the acute vulnerability of workers and small businesses during off-peak months.
- The Yoga & Wellness sector is the fastest-growing employment segment, with teacher training courses attracting international enrolment that generates foreign exchange income even in lean seasons.
- Adventure tourism, while representing a smaller share of total employment, generates disproportionately high revenue per job due to premium pricing of rafting and camping packages.
- Temple and pilgrimage service workers form a large informal sector with limited access to social protection, skill development programmes, or formal credit — representing a key policy gap.
- Infrastructure-linked employment (transport, construction, event management) expands significantly during government-funded development phases, suggesting public investment as a key employment lever.

**CHAPTER 7: ECONOMIC PARAMETERS AND INDICATORS**

**7.1 PARAMETERS AND INDICATORS OF RELIGIOUS TOURISM — RISHIKESH**

<b>Parameter</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Details / Examples</b>
Revenue Generation	Annual tourism revenue; festival revenue peaks; revenue by sector	Estimated Rs. 2,800–3,200 crore total annual tourism revenue (2023); Ganga Aarti events alone generate Rs. 15–20 crore during peak seasons
Tourist Footfall	Annual & monthly arrivals; domestic vs. international split; average spending	10.42 lakh total (2021) to 10.90 lakh (2023); avg. domestic spending Rs. 3,200/visit; international Rs. 12,000–18,000/stay
Employment Impact	Direct, indirect, seasonal employment; gender distribution	68,500 direct + 42,500 indirect jobs; women constitute 35–40% of yoga and wellness sector workforce
Yoga & Wellness Economy	No. of registered yoga schools; annual TTC enrolments; retreat revenue	200+ registered yoga schools; ~15,000 international TTC students annually; sector revenue Rs. 400–600 crore/year
Infrastructure Development	Govt. investment; transport infrastructure; accommodation capacity	Rs. 320 crore PRASHAD investment; 500+ registered accommodation units; NH-58 4-laning improving Char Dham access
Small Business Growth	Number of small businesses; revenue from local enterprises; support programmes	3,500+ registered small tourism-linked businesses; microfinance penetration growing at 18% p.a.
Cultural Preservation	Heritage conservation; cultural promotion; traditional arts	Ganga Aarti preservation; Uttarakhand handloom GI products; Parmarth cultural festivals
Environmental Impact	Waste management; Ganga pollution levels; sustainability initiatives	Namami Gange project reducing river pollution; plastic ban enforcement; eco-tourism pilots in Neelkanth zone
Government Policy	Budget allocations; key schemes; tax incentives; policy outcomes	PRASHAD, Swadesh Darshan, Namami Gange, Char Dham Mahamarg Vikas Pariyojana; GST exemptions for small dharmshala operators

*Source: Interpreted by Author, 2025*

## 7.2 COMPARATIVE REVENUE DISTRIBUTION — RISHIKESH vs. SIMILAR CITIES

The table below compares the revenue distribution profile of Rishikesh with Varanasi and Haridwar, highlighting the structural distinctiveness of the Rishikesh economy.

Revenue Component	Rishikesh (%)	Varanasi (%)	Haridwar (%)	Rishikesh Differentiator
Pilgrimage Services	20–28%	35–45%	30–40%	Lower share; diversified by yoga economy
Accommodation	22–28%	15–20%	18–24%	Higher per-room revenue from international guests
Yoga & Wellness	15–20%	2–4%	3–5%	Unique pillar; not replicated at scale elsewhere
Food & Beverage	10–14%	5–10%	8–12%	Cafe culture; organic dining segment growing
Retail & Handicrafts	8–12%	25–30%	12–16%	Spiritual retail; yoga equipment prominent
Transportation	6–9%	10–13%	8–10%	Char Dham taxi economy significant driver
Adventure Tourism	5–8%	0–1%	0–1%	Rishikesh exclusive; rafting & camping premium
Govt. Taxes & Others	3–7%	5–8%	5–8%	Comparable across cities

Source: Author comparison based on Uttarakhand Tourism Dept. data and secondary literature.

## CHAPTER 8: SEASONAL EMPLOYMENT DRIVERS & BUSINESS IMPACT

Driver	Period	Impact on Local Businesses
Char Dham Yatra Opening	April–June	Massive surge in accommodation, transport, food; taxi and guide sector peaks; hotels report 90–100% occupancy
International Yoga Day	21 June	Global media attention; spike in yoga school enrolments; government-organized events boost retail
Kanwar Yatra	July–August (Sawan)	Millions of Shiva devotees en route Haridwar-Rishikesh; food stalls and temporary vendors surge
Navratri Festival	March–April & Oct	Temple visits intensify; flower, incense, and puja material vendors see 3–4x sales increase
Dev Deepawali & Ganga Aarti Specials	November	Premier tourism event; accommodation fully booked 2–3 months ahead; events industry peaks

International Yoga Festivals	Feb–March	Rishikesh Yoga Festival (Parmarth) draws 2,000+ international participants; hospitality and retail benefit
Adventure Season	Sept–Nov & Feb–May	Rafting and camping operators generate premium revenue; adventure tourists have higher daily spend
Monsoon Off-Season	July–September	Sharp contraction; many establishments close; river-based businesses suspended; 40–60% revenue decline

*Source: Interpreted by Author, 2025*

## CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### 9.1 CONCLUSION

This study has systematically examined the economic impact of religious tourism on local business development in Rishikesh, Uttarakhand over the 2019–2023 period. The analysis yields the following major conclusions:

- Rishikesh's tourism economy is structurally more resilient than single-purpose pilgrimage cities due to its unique combination of religious pilgrimage, yoga and wellness, and adventure tourism — creating multiple demand segments that partially offset each other's seasonal weaknesses.
- The COVID-19 pandemic caused catastrophic economic disruption (78.7% footfall decline in 2020), but recovery was swift, with 2023 figures surpassing 2019 pre-pandemic baselines — demonstrating the enduring strength of religiously-motivated tourism demand.
- Approximately 68,500 direct jobs and 42,500 indirect jobs are sustained by religious tourism in Rishikesh, making it the economic foundation of the city's workforce. However, 32,500 seasonal jobs represent a significant vulnerability.
- The Yoga & Wellness sector is Rishikesh's most distinctive economic asset, generating 15–20% of tourism revenue with a growing international clientele that extends economic activity beyond the peak pilgrimage season.
- Infrastructure investments under PRASHAD, Namami Gange, and Char Dham connectivity projects have been key enablers of tourism growth, validating the economic multiplier model for public investment in religious tourism destinations.

### 9.2 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Area	Recommendation	Expected Outcome
Year-Round Tourism	Develop monsoon retreat packages; promote Rishikesh as a wellness destination during July–September	Reduce seasonal economic volatility; maintain employment continuity
Yoga Economy Formalisation	Establish a quality certification authority for yoga schools; create Rishikesh Yoga Brand	Increase per-capita international tourist spending; reduce

		exploitative unregulated operators
Small Business Support	Microfinance access programmes for informal sector vendors; digital payment infrastructure	Financial inclusion; resilience to demand shocks; increased transaction values
Infrastructure	Expand ghat infrastructure; improve parking and pedestrian zones near Ram & Laxman Jhula	Increase tourist capacity; improve visitor experience and spending time
Environmental Sustainability	Enforce plastic ban; incentivise eco-certified accommodation; expand Ganga clean-up	Preserve the natural and spiritual asset base that underpins the tourism economy
Equitable Distribution	Community benefit tourism levies; skill development for local guides and artisans	More inclusive economic benefits; reduce income inequality between formal and informal sector
Data & Monitoring	Establish a Rishikesh Tourism Economic Observatory for real-time data collection	Enable evidence-based policy and rapid response to tourism shocks

*Source: Author recommendations based on comparative analysis and literature review.*

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