

Paragliding Events & Festivals: Catalyzing Aero-Sports Tourism Development in India

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ABSTRACT

India's diverse geographical landscape and rich cultural history make it an ideal destination for paragliding events and festivals, highlighting its potential for aero sports tourism in the world. India has been the host of the Paragliding World Cup, and Paragliding Accuracy Pre-World Cup integrating with various cultural events and festivals. Paragliding destinations of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, and Kerala have gained popularity among the paragliding community worldwide by hosting paragliding "events & festivals". This study has evaluated the potential of the paragliding destination of various states in India and the role of paragliding "events and festivals" in aero-sports tourism development in India. After analyzing the data from the secondary sources found the various challenges for aero sports tourism in India. Managerial implication has underlined the importance of strategic planning required by state tourism departments, paragliding associations, and local communities to incorporate music and dance festivals with paragliding events. Skill development and training programs for local youth, development of the infrastructure, sustainable environmental practices, and effective marketing and promotion will all contribute to the growth of paragliding tourism in India. Findings highlight the incorporation of local culture (dance music & food) into paragliding festivals, which promotes India's rich heritage. Organizing events and festivals at Aero sports destinations attract tourists as well as benefits the local economy, resulting in job growth. Sustainable environment-friendly practices and community participation can reduce environmental damage and it will promote a sense of ownership among locals. The results underline the importance of empowering local communities to benefit from paragliding tourism development. Paragliding festivals not only paragliding pilots and tourists, but they also serve as an effective destination marketing tool, promoting lesser-known destinations and contributing to India's long-term Aero-sports tourism development goals.

Keywords- paragliding, aero-sports, events & festivals, paragliding tourism.

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Fairs and festivals embody the soul of India's cultural heritage, embodying traditions that have endured through centuries. The "Incredible India" campaign's efforts to project and preserve these celebrations have been pivotal in promoting India's rich cultural diversity (Munjal & Jauhari, 2015). "Events & Festivals" plays a

significant importance in tourism development and attracting new tourists to destinations. The "Banff Centre Mountain Film and Book Festival" is the world's largest adventure film tour, organized by the Banff Centre to promote mountain culture globally. This flagship program reaches 45 countries across all seven continents through its extensive world tour ("Banff center mountain film and book festival & world tour," n.d.). In 2013, the World Leisure Games Organizing Committee

signed a memorandum of understanding to host the 2015 World Leisure Games in Qingdao, China. The festival featured paragliding along with other adventure activities, highlighting the increasing significance of paragliding in global leisure events. This inclusion underscores paragliding's role in attracting tourists and advancing adventure sports (Edginton, 2013).

Similarly in the field of paragliding sports tourism top rank paragliding pilots participate in events, i.e. Paragliding World Cup Events & Super finals, Acro World Tour, in different paragliding destinations around the different countries (Acro World Tour, n.d.).

The PWC Asian Tour events serve as a pathway to the Superfinal in the World Cup and are designed to promote the growth of the sport in Asia. These events host world-class competitions, facilitate the development of new venues, and provide training opportunities for emerging organizers (PWCA - About us," n.d.).

India also has been the host of major paragliding events such as the Paragliding pre word cup, paragliding world cup, and accuracy world cup, and accuracy pre-world Cup, Acro festivals at various destinations like Bir-Billing, Panchagani, Tehri, Northeastern states of India, these festivals combine cultural events as well to promote tourism and cultural heritage of the native place.

II. LITERATURE REVIEWS

In the past ten years, paragliding festivals have become important in tourism, attracting visitors to local and international destinations (Çalik et al., 2021; Sahin, 2014; Terra et al., 2013; Gyepi-Garbrah & Preko, 2022). Some well-known paragliding festivals include the Mu Cang Chai Paragliding Festival in Vietnam, themed "Flying Over Golden Fields" (Vietnam Tourism, 2022), and the "Kwahu Paragliding Festival" in Ghana, which has been held since 2005. The Kwahu festival was created as part of Ghana's tourism development efforts (Setyanto et al., 2023) to become a leading tourism destination in Africa (Visit Ghana, 2024).

Tourists mostly prefer to visit the country that offers paragliding along with festivals among nature activities (Page et al. 2006). Few other paragliding festivals like "Explorers Festival" and the "Wreck Diving Festival" in Lodz (Poland) contribute to promoting adventure tourism by offering unique experiences, connecting enthusiasts with experts, and fostering interest in diverse forms of adventure activities within the city (Cudny, 2016; Cudny & Rouba, 2011). Similarly in India, paragliding events are crucial for promoting aero-sports tourism as well. According to the Paragliding Association of India (PAI) General Secretary Manoj Roy, the aim of paragliding festivals is to showcase paragliding destinations alongside local culture and art of the state (Standard, 2012). There is no doubt that paragliding has become a recreational sport that is helping to reposition some rural communities as popular tourist destinations (Costa and Chalip, 2005). Another study on the

resident's perception of festivals in Łódź contributes valuable insights to the existing literature on festival studies. The positive attitude of residents towards festivals, their significant role in enhancing the city's image, and the popularity of well-known events underscore the social and economic importance of festivals in urban settings (Korec et al., 2012). Another study by (Setyanto et al., 2023) emphasized the potential of paragliding as a sport to enhance rural tourism in Banyumas Regency in Indonesia. They noted that paragliding could be a significant asset in promoting rural tourism, fostering economic growth, and supporting community development.

A similar study on residents' perception of host-guest interaction about Kwahu Easter Festival (KEF) as festival tourism local residents of Ghana welcome the idea of hosting the paragliding festivals. The study used Doxey's Irridex model of host-guest relationship and found that the residents exhibited a mood of "Euphoria" towards the festival tourists, indicating a positive attitude. Additionally, the study revealed that the local residents actively engage with festival tourists during the peak season of the celebration, offering to teach them local food and drink preparation. It was noted that antagonism was not present among the Kwahu community in relation to tourism development (Imbeah et al., 2016). Another example is the Kwahu Easter paragliding festival in Ghana, which attracts numerous paragliding enthusiasts and tourists from both within Ghana and internationally. It is one of the major paragliding events in the West African sub-region (Setyanto et al., 2023)

According to the following literature analysis, there is little research in India on paragliding activities, festivals, and events. Furthermore, the function of paragliding events and festivals in growing paragliding tourism in India has to be explored and framed the following objectives for the research.

III. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. Assessing the potential of paragliding sports tourism destinations in India.
2. Evaluating the role of "events & festivals" in aero-sports tourism development in India.
3. Identifying managerial implications for developing aero sports tourism in India.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research data was collected from various secondary sources, including reports from the Ministry of Tourism (GOI, journal articles,), electronic media, Paragliding Association websites, newspapers, state tourism websites, and their social media handles to reach the study objectives. The data was collected, summarized, and processed, and analysis was carried out to fulfill the research objectives (Wang et al., 1995).

V. ASSESSING THE POTENTIAL OF THE PARAGLIDING SPORTS TOURISM DESTINATIONS IN INDIA

India is the land of diversity it holds 70 percent of the Himalayan region and approximately 7000 km of the coastlines. India is the perfect destination for paragliding-like activities in aero sports. High Himalayas, western ghats, and coastlines have huge potential for paragliding tourism. Few are fellow destinations in the Indian states highlighting and evaluating its high potential of paragliding tourism in various states.

1. Himachal Pradesh: Himachal Pradesh has almost 15 paragliding destinations suitable for learning paragliding, cross-country flying, accuracy competition and acro flying paragliding learning and competitions. Dhauladhar range in Kangra Valley attracts cross-country as well as hike and fly paragliding tourists from around the world. Mountains connectivity between Chamba -Kangra -Mandi-Kullu-Manali gives huge potential for camping and flying in the mountains for advanced professional pilots. Famous Paragliding sites are Khajjiyar, Bir-Billing, Dharamshala, Tang Narwana, Solang Nala, Marhi (Manali), Dhobi, Prashar, Spenidhar and Bandla Dhar (Bilaspur), are major paragliding destinations. Bir-Billing, Tang Narwana, and Bandla Dhar are major destinations for paragliding competitions events, and festivals. It has been host to the XC paragliding World Cup and pre-world Cup competition, Accuracy Pre World Cup, and Acro competitions. Pong Dam (Kangra) and Bandla Dhar are the major destinations in Himachal Pradesh for learning in acro paragliding and doing safety training in paragliding like SIV (Simulation in Vonn).

2. Maharashtra: Maharashtra has two major paragliding sites one is Kamshet & another one is Panchgani. Kamshet is located near Pune and Mumbai and is very famous for paragliding events and festivals. This paragliding site is known as the paragliding capital of Maharashtra. Whereas Panchgani is located in the Western Ghats. Other paragliding destinations in Maharashtra are, Shelar Mahabaleshwar, Tower Hill, and Indapur. Paragliding enthusiasts from near and far visit these places because of the breathtaking scenery of the Western Ghats and the ideal weather conditions for paragliding.

3. Sikkim: As a small state, Sikkim offers two paragliding sites in Reshithang Village, which offer exhilarating paragliding options of Medium Fly and High Fly.

The Medium Fly from Baliman Dhara takes tourists to elevations of 1300-1400 meters for 5-10 minutes, offering breathtaking views of Gangtok and the Himalayan mountains. The High Fly from Bulbuley Dhara (near Ranka) takes 15-20 minutes to reach 2200 meters and offers views of the spectacular Kanchenjunga ranges and snow-covered mountains. Both flights provide

thrilling experiences against the backdrop of Sikkim's natural beauty.

4. Mizoram: Mizoram paragliding destination offers thrilling experiences and stunning mountain views. One of the such paragliding sites in Mizoram is at Hmuifang near Aizawl, where paragliding pilots and tourist can soar above lush green hills and enjoy panoramic views of the surrounding valleys. Paragliding in these the hills allows pilots to view Mizoram's beauty from a new perspective, making it a memorable and exciting journey.

5. Nagaland: Dzukou Valley in Kohima is the popular paragliding destination in the state. Paragliding pilots enjoy lush green hills with picturesque valley views. Another paragliding destination is Kapamodzü in Nagaland which offers an excellent paragliding experience. Paragliding in these Nagaland hills allows tourists to experience Nagaland's natural beauty from a thrilling aerial perspective, making it an unforgettable experience for tourists looking for outdoor excitement.

6. Tripura: Jampui Hills is a renowned paragliding destination in Tripura. Jampui Hills, located in North Tripura, is known for its scenic beauty and pleasant climate. The hills, with their gentle slopes and clear sky, provide great paragliding space for enjoying the adventure.

7. Assam: In the recent few years, adventure tourism and paragliding activity have gained popularity in Assam, drawing both adventure enthusiasts and tourists seeking unique experiences. Paragliding in Kamakhya Hills offers a unique experience to appreciate the natural beauty of the land.

8. West Bengal: Kalimpong stands out as a premier paragliding destination in the Darjeeling region of West Bengal. Deolo Hill in Kalimpong serves as a favored launch site, offering exhilarating flights that showcase panoramic views of the Teesta River and the majestic mountains. Additionally, Deolo Park is emerging as a sought-after spot for paragliding, providing breathtaking vistas of the Himalayas and the picturesque valleys below.

9. Uttarakhand: Uttarakhand has a famous paragliding destination named Tehri, Maldevta (in Dehradun). Tehri Dam is famous for paragliding acro festivals. Apart from these other destinations in Uttarakhand for paragliding are Bhimtal, Kota Bagh, Nainital, Kausani, and Bageshwar.

10. Jammu & Kashmir: Jammu & Kashmir has beautiful mountains that offer suitable conditions for paragliding few of the notable paragliding sites are Gulmarg Paragliding, Pahalgam paragliding, Patni Top Paragliding, Gulmarg Paragliding, Baderwah paragliding. Hajan paragliding is another popular sport on the way to Chandan Wari.

11. Kerala: Vagamon is one of the major paragliding destinations in Kerala. It is located in the Idduki district. Tourists and paragliders visit this place to enjoy the tandem joy ride and learn paragliding. Paragliding activities in Vagamon are conducted only at a specific time of the year because of its weather conditions. This place offers to enjoy an aerial view of the surrounding tea

plantation and valleys. Paragliding festivals and events attract tourists and crowds from the surrounding to watch paragliding competitions and festivals at this place.

12. Madhya Pradesh: Panchmarhi is the famous paragliding destination in Madhya Pradesh. Another paragliding destination is Hanumantiya Island very close to Indore which offers paragliding activities during the annual 'Jal Mahotsav Festivals'. This festival celebrates water sports and other adventure activities including paragliding, against the backdrop of the serene Indira Sagar Lake.

13. Goa: Arambol Beach, Anjuna Beach, and Calangute Beach are three major paragliding spots in Goa. These paragliding sites are best for beach flying and enjoy the breathtaking coastal views. Paragliding adventure seekers and tourists enjoy paragliding tandem rides and soar high on the beaches of Goa. In the past, it has been the host of paragliding events and festivals to attract more tourists to this adventure activity.

14. Gujrat: Saputara Hills in Gujrat is the place for paragliding in Gujrat. Saputara is a picturesque hill station in the Dhang District. Paragliding is conducted here during winter months when the weather is ideal. Efforts have been taken to develop the paragliding in other areas like Junagadh, Girnar Hill, and Pavagadh near Vadodara. These paragliding destinations have the huge potential to become the hub of adventure paragliding and other adventure activities.

15. Haryana: Morni Hills near Tikkar Tal is one of the major Paragliding destinations in Haryana it is located in Panchkula district. Morni Hills is about 45 kilometers from Chandigarh and has a good road network other places like Damadama and Aravali Hills have also been identified as potential venues for air-based activities in Haryana.

16. Tamil Nadu: Known for its picturesque landscapes and favorable wind conditions, Yelagiri is a popular destination for paragliding. The hills and valleys provide an excellent backdrop for an adventurous flight. PAI's innovative Winch Paragliding project at Thirumoorthy Dam, led by VP South G. Surendhran, utilized a speed boat-mounted winch. The site, surrounded by forested mountains and flatlands offers optimal conditions for SIV and Acro flying. Over five days, pilots performed full stalls and acrobatic maneuvers, with safety measures in place. Plans include future SIV courses and additional Acro flying events (**Winch paragliding in Tamil Nadu, 2019**).

Every state listed above that has paragliding destinations offers different flying conditions and breathtaking views for different types of paragliding competitions. Festivals that are dedicated to paragliding are an important way to promote tourism, stimulate the local economy, and introduce people to new and interesting paragliding locations. These paragliding spots may attract more visitors if they are developed and promoted through festivals and activities. It will contribute to the growth of the local economies and position India as the world's top paragliding destination.

VI. PARAGLIDING EVENTS & FESTIVALS HAPPENED IN INDIA

Several events and festivals take place in India at various paragliding destinations across different states. These events attract tourists, visitors paragliding participants & paragliding tourists in large numbers Below is the list of various, events festivals, and competitions that happened in India.

Table 1: States with Paragliding Festivals and Competition Events in India

Sr. N.	Festivals/ Events Name	Place	Year & Date	State
1	National Paragliding Accuracy Competiton	Tehri	22-25 April 2024	Uttarakhand
2	Vagamom Paragliding Festival	Vagamom	13-18 March 2024	Kerala
3	Indian Pre-World Cup - Panchgani Open	Panchgani	12 -18 February 2024	Maharashtra
4	Dhauladhar Paragliding Accuracy Pre-World Cup	Tang-Narwana	13-17 November 2023	Himachal Pradesh
5	Xc Paragliding Pre-World Cup 2023	Bir Billing	26 Oct- 2 Nov 2023	Himachal Pradesh
6	Accuracy Paragliding Pre-World Cup India 2023	Bir Billing	5 Apr - 9 Apr, 2023	Himachal Pradesh
7	Tehri Acro Festival	Tehri	2023	Uttarakhand
8	International Paragliding Accuracy Championship	Serchhip	14-17 Feb 2020	Mizoram
9	Bodoland International Paragliding Accuracy Championship	Kokrajhar	10-15 Nov 2019	Assam
10	PG Accuracy Pre-World Cup Kamshet	Kamshet	6 June 2018	Maharashtra
11	Arunachal Paragliding Festival	Pappu valley	2018	Arunachal Pradesh

12	Pre-World Cup, Mizoram Open Paragliding Accuracy Championship	Serchhip	2018	Mizoram
13	Kehloor Paragliding Accuracy Cup 2021	Bilaspur	17-23 March 2021	Himachal Pradesh
14	4th PAI Paragliding India Accuracy Comp 2017	Kamshet	11-12 February 2017	Maharashtra
15	1st Sikkim Paragliding Red Panda International Accuracy Open Championship	Reshithang	17-21 Dec 2017	Sikkim
16	PAI Paragliding India XC League	Bir Billing	13 Feb 2016	Himachal Pradesh
17	National Open Accuracy Championship	Bir Billing	2016	Himachal Pradesh
18	7th International Paragliding Adventure Carnival	Vagamon	21 Feb – 1 March 2015	Kerala
19	Paragliding World Cup 2015	Bir Billing	2015	Himachal Pradesh
20	Kamshet Paragliding Festival	Kamshet	16 – 18 May 2014	Maharashtra
21	6th International Paragliding Festival	Vagamon	22- Feb-2 March 2014	Kerala
22	XC Pre World Cup 2013	Bir Billing	2013	Himachal Pradesh
23	Fun-Flying Beach Festival	Anjuna Beach	2012	Goa

This (Table 1) provides a comprehensive overview of paragliding events and festivals across India, highlighting the diversity of locations and the annual recurrence of these thrilling activities. Each event showcases the unique landscapes and paragliding conditions of different states, making India a prime destination for paragliding enthusiasts.

Types of the Evens and the Competitions:

Understanding the various types and categories of paragliding competitions, events, and festivals held in India (Table 1) at different paragliding destinations is essential. Below is an explanation of the different types and categories:

1. Cross-Country Paragliding Events or Competitions:

Cross Country (XC) paragliding is all about flying in the air for many hours to cover long flat distances or triangle distances by using the energy of the wind and hot thermals. In XC paragliding competitions, there are two main types: flying the furthest distance (Open Distance) and being the first to finish (Race to Goal). Competition pilots receive some additional bonus points for being in the front (leading the race), gaining the highest altitude, and penalties (e.g. for entering forbidden zones) for cloud flying. So the first pilot landing the goal is not necessarily the one who will win the task. The first Paragliding World Championship was held in Koessen, Austria, in 1989 ("**Paragliding cross country (XC), 2020**"). The CIVL (Commission Internationale de Vol Libre) under the FAI (Fédération Aéronautique Internationale) oversees XC competitions, including FAI Category 1 and Category 2 events. Advanced XC pilots who compete in these events use high-performance paragliders (EN-B, EN-C, CC) that have high maximum speeds. India also hosted the XC World Cup and Pre-World Cup at Bir Billing and Panchagni (Table.1).



Source: PWCA

2. Accuracy Events and Festivals: Since the first FAI World Paragliding Accuracy Championships in the UK in 2000, this CIVL event has grown in popularity. Today, about 1,000 pilots from over 50 countries are in the CIVL Paragliding Accuracy database and WPRS. European countries were dominating in Paragliding Accuracy, but now Asia is catching up, with top pilots from China, Indonesia, Thailand, and Korea. The number of competitions is steadily increasing, with many new countries organizing their own events ("**Paragliding accuracy, 2024**"). India also organized many accuracy competitions (Table:1). One of such accuracy event and festival named Dhauladhar Paragliding Accuracy Pre

World Cup, happened in the Narwana, Dharmshala in which the diameter at the landing point was set only 5 meters instead of 10 meters, it happened first time making the competition more exciting and difficult.

According to the rules of accuracy paragliding competitions have five rounds, however, the Pre-World Cup conducted in Narwana, H.P. had seven rounds. This made the competition more exciting and challenging for the participants. Many prominent paragliders from India and beyond took part in the Pre-World Cup at Narwana, Dharmshala (SNS, 2023).



Source: Author

3. Acro Events and Festivals: The Tehri Acro Festival 2023 is India's inaugural international aerial acrobatics show, showcasing renowned paragliders in events like Acro Flying, Syncro Flying, and Wing Suit Flying. Organized by the Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board (UTDB), the festival aims to establish Tehri as a global paragliding hub, drawing visitors worldwide. Alongside competitions, attendees can enjoy workshops, demos, live music, and free-flying opportunities for all skill levels.



Source: PWCA

4. Hike and Fly competitions and Events: A Paragliding Hike & Fly competition is defined as a competition (Event) based on a combination of flying moments together with hiking displacement by foot on the ground (at ground altitude), by competitors carrying their own equipment in a given period. During the Event, the Competitor must fly his/her paraglider, hike, and carry the Mandatory Equipment (see section "Equipment") without any form of physical assistance at any time. Red Bull X-Alps extreme hike-and-fly race, founded in 2003 by Hannes Arch, the race is renowned for testing the world's top hike-and-fly competitors, with men and women competing on equal footing. It is the most popular hike and fly racing event in the Alps. In this event participants, known as "adventurers," must navigate through various checkpoints across multiple countries, relying solely on their paragliding skills and physical endurance. This biennial event attracts top athletes from around the world and is considered one of the toughest adventure races, testing both mental resilience and physical prowess. The race's unique format and demanding nature make it a thrilling spectacle for participants and spectators alike, showcasing the ultimate blend of adventure, strategy, and athleticism (Zoom, n.d.).

After the popularity of paragliding and its hike & fly format Working Group of the Federation of the Aeronautical International (FAI) regarding the feasibility of creating a new competition discipline for hike and fly will be presented at the 2024 CIVL Plenary for approval. If approved, a permanent Committee will be established to oversee the new discipline. Thomas Senac has been selected as the chair for the working group, bringing his expertise from the French Federation and involvement in Hike and Fly development (Sporting Code section 7," 2017).



Source: Red Bull X alps

The first hike and fly competition of FAI 2 category got approval from FAI and “Real Federación Aeronáutica Española” (NAC of Spain) which named as “Pyrenees International Hike & Fly Ozone Open & Spanish Championship.” It was held from 7th June to 9th June 2024, in Port De Suert, Spain.

The hike and fly competitions event organizers launched registration on CIVLcomps.org before the FAI Hike and Fly project was finished (“**first-ever FAI hike and fly competition,**” 2024). Another hike and fly event registered in the FAI event management system is the Norwegian Vol Bivouac Challenge from 1-2 June 2024 with no FAI category and JURAirTour OPEN in Switzerland from 30th May to 2nd June 2024 with FAI CAT 2 event category (“**Events,**” 2024). Despite having a great opportunity to organize hike and fly events, India has not yet bid for any hike and fly competition in FAI category events.

5. Paragliding Festivals: Paragliding festivals in India attract both Indian and international pilots who participate in a variety of events. Paragliding festivals and events mostly includes free flying, spot landing contests, tandem joy rides and acro shows to show the thrill of paragliding activity to tourists and local gathering. In addition to this seminars on paragliding safety are organized for students and youth, enhancing their understanding of the sport. For example, the Bir Billing Paragliding Festival showcases such events and includes vibrant cultural programs like traditional Himachali dance performances and music festivals. Similarly, the Kamshet Paragliding Festival in Maharashtra includes local folk dances and music, while the Panchgani Paragliding Festival in Maharashtra combines flying events with cultural showcases like Lavani dance performances and regional cuisine festivals. These festivals offer a rich cultural experience for participants and tourists alike.



Source: Fly Vagamon

VII. PARAGLIDING TOURISM: EVENTS & FESTIVALS IN INDIA AND ITS CHALLENGES

1. The imposition of sanctions has restricted Russian and Belarusian paragliding tourists, who form a

significant portion of paragliding pilots visiting India, from participating in the Paragliding World Cup and other competitions. This restriction impacts tourism significantly, as many Russian paragliding enthusiasts have traditionally been key visitors to India. (Ewing, 2022).

2. The high rescue and response time in paragliding incidents highlights the need for enhanced safety and rescue infrastructure, which remains a major challenge in India.
3. Developing global-standard infrastructure at each paragliding destination should be a top priority for the Indian government to ensure safety and attract international tourists for paragliding events and festivals.
4. The growth of paragliding tourism is hindered by the high cost of equipment, driven up by a 20% import customs duty and an 18% Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST) on imported paragliding gear.
5. Grading paragliding destinations based on their specific use and safety standards is crucial. This will make operations safer and more organized for various events competitions and festivals.
6. The Ministry of Civil Aviation should designate major aero sports destinations as exclusive fly zones, restricting aircraft, drones, microlight, and other aviation activities to prevent conflicts and enhance safety.
7. Strengthening wireless and satellite communication systems in aero-sports tourism activities is essential for ensuring safety and coordination during paragliding events.

VIII. COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES OF PARAGLIDING EVENTS FESTIVALS AND TOURISM IN INDIA

During Winter in Europe, Russia, and America it is not possible to the Paragliding activities. During this period Indian paragliding destinations can conduct the Xc paragliding competitions, Accuracy World Cup, Acro Competitions, and Hike and Fly competitions and festivals to attract paragliding tourists around the world. Indian paragliding destinations provide unique climatic conditions for paragliding, Bir Billing Marhi and Khajjiyar provide high mountain flying experience. Panchgani, Vagamon like a destination provides a plateau and flat land paragliding destination. Paragliding places like Goa provide beach flying destinations, and Paragliding destinations in North Eastern States like Sikkim, and Darjeeling provide Mountain flying experiences with different climatic conditions.

IX. MANAGERIAL STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING AERO SPORTS TOURISM THROUGH EVENTS AND FESTIVALS IN INDIA

1. Paragliding events and festivals provide recognition to paragliding destinations at the world level through media attention and the paragliding participants' gathering and their experiences.
2. The Hike and Fly competitions are gaining popularity at local paragliding destinations in India. Emphasizing these events can attract the global paragliding community and boost aero-sports tourism. Organizing the FAI category Hike and Fly competitions will highlight India on the global aero sports tourism map, particularly in this special category, drawing international attention and participation.
3. Paragliding competitors "Events & Festivals" calendar should be developed (State Level or National Level) and information should be circulated at least 5 months before to other countries to attract more international participants and paragliding tourists.
4. Proper coordination between the State Tourism Board, Ministry of Tourism, Central Nodal Agency-Adventure Tourism, Aero Club of India, and Paragliding Association at the State and National levels should be established to meet the Air Sports vision of making India a top Air sport destination by 2030.
5. Paragliding festivals should be organized frequently to promote paragliding in new paragliding destinations along with the local art and culture of the state.
6. New paragliding destinations should host paragliding festivals (i.e. hike and fly festivals and acro festivals) and already established paragliding destinations should host various paragliding competitions such as accuracy competitions, XC competitions, acro competitions, and hike & fly competitions.

X. FINDINGS

Based on the research objectives we found the below-mentioned points are:

1. **Promotion of Local Culture and Heritage:** Paragliding festivals in India effectively promote local culture and heritage by incorporating traditional music, dance, and crafts, attracting tourists to experience the region's rich cultural tapestry.
2. **Economic Boost:** These festivals provide an economic boost to local communities through increased tourist inflow, creating jobs, and supporting local businesses, including hospitality, handicrafts, and transport.

3. **Environmental Sustainability:** Properly managed paragliding festivals ensure minimal environmental impact, with organizers increasingly focusing on sustainable practices such as waste management and eco-friendly infrastructure.
4. **Community Involvement:** Active participation of local communities in organizing and managing these festivals fosters a sense of ownership and pride, enhancing the overall experience for visitors and ensuring the sustainability of the event.
5. **Skill Development and Training:** Paragliding festivals should include training workshops and certification programs, contributing to the development of skilled paragliding pilots and enhancing safety standards in the sport.
6. **Destination Marketing:** These festivals serve as effective marketing tools for lesser-known destinations, putting them on the tourism map and attracting adventure enthusiasts from around the world.

XI. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

1. **Strategic Planning:** State tourism departments should collaborate with local communities, paragliding associations, and event management companies to strategically plan and promote paragliding festivals.
2. **Infrastructure Development:** Investment in infrastructure, including safe launch sites, accommodation, and transport facilities, is crucial to support the growth of paragliding tourism. This infrastructure will help in paragliding events and approvals from FAI and helps in organizing the festival and competitions.
3. **Sustainable Practices:** Emphasizing sustainable practices in organizing air-sports festivals, such as waste management, eco-friendly materials, and conservation efforts, can ensure the long-term success and minimal environmental impact of the events and festivals.
4. **Marketing and Promotion:** Leveraging digital marketing, social media, and partnerships with international paragliding associations, and International Tourism boards can enhance the visibility of air sports festivals, and competitions and attract a global audience.
5. **Capacity Building:** Implementing training programs and workshops for local residents can equip them with the necessary skills to participate in and benefit from paragliding tourism, fostering community involvement and economic growth.

XII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This research highlights the significant potential of paragliding tourism in India in various air-sports

destinations, emphasizing the need for strategic development to overcome current challenges. Locals, visitors, and international paragliding pilots find the paragliding competition events and festivals with cultural activities (dancing, music, activities) make paragliding events quite popular. The impact of international sanctions, high equipment costs, and insufficient safety infrastructure must be addressed to enhance the sector's growth. By investing in global-standard infrastructure, promoting unique regional experiences and organizing a variety of events and festivals, India can attract global paragliding enthusiasts to boost local economies. There should be emphasis on environmentally friendly sustainable practices, effective marketing, and community involvement will further support this growth for the paragliding events. Paragliding festivals and events can serve as an effective destination marketing tool for promoting lesser-known paragliding destinations. Organizing the events and festivals related to paragliding air sports activities need strong collaborative efforts between government agencies, skill and training programs with local communities and paragliding associations are very much essential to establishing India as a premier destination for aero-sports tourism by 2030, ensuring both the safety and enjoyment of participants while preserving the environment (Gyepi-Garbrah & Preko, 2022). This study only focused on the secondary data sources and further quantitative and qualitative methods can be used in future research to explore the role of paragliding events and festivals in developing tourism in India.

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