



NAVI MUMBAI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT A CATALYST FOR REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY AND ECONOMIC GROWTH**Dr. Kshamali Sontakke****Head and Associate Professor,****Department of Commerce, Chetana College, Bandra East, Mumbai.****ABSTRACT:**

The Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA) is poised to become a transformative infrastructure project that significantly enhances regional connectivity and drives economic development in Maharashtra and beyond. Designed as a greenfield airport to complement the overburdened Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport in Mumbai, NMIA aims to handle millions of passengers and tons of cargo annually, thereby alleviating congestion and supporting future aviation growth. Strategically located in Navi Mumbai, the airport is expected to serve as a major hub for both domestic and international travel, linking underserved regions and boosting accessibility to key economic zones. The development of NMIA is also projected to catalyze urban expansion, create employment opportunities, and attract investments in sectors such as logistics, real estate, tourism, and services. This paper explores NMIA's potential to reshape the regional transport landscape, its role in enhancing multimodal connectivity, and its broader implications for sustainable urban and economic growth. It also addresses the challenges related to land acquisition, environmental concerns, and project execution timelines, offering a balanced view of both the opportunities and complexities involved in such a mega infrastructure initiative.



KEYWORDS: *Navi Mumbai International Airport, NMIA, Regional Connectivity, Economic Growth, Infrastructure Development, Urban Expansion, Aviation Hub, Transportation.*

INTRODUCTION

The Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA) represents one of India's most ambitious infrastructure projects, aimed at redefining the aviation landscape of the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) and enhancing the country's global connectivity. Conceived as a solution to the over-saturation of the existing Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport in Mumbai, NMIA is being developed to handle the rapidly growing air traffic demands of one of India's busiest urban regions. Strategically located in Navi Mumbai, the new airport is expected to serve as a critical node for both domestic and international flights, acting as a gateway to the western coast of India and beyond. Its development is not only pivotal for decongesting existing infrastructure but also for driving long-term economic growth, attracting foreign investment, and boosting regional trade and tourism. In addition to improving air connectivity, NMIA is expected to be a catalyst for large-scale urban development, stimulating the growth of smart cities, industrial corridors, logistics parks, and service-based economies in surrounding areas. The airport's integration with road, rail, and sea transport networks positions it as a cornerstone of multimodal connectivity and regional transformation. This introduction

sets the stage for a comprehensive exploration of how NMIA will impact regional connectivity and act as a driving force for economic expansion, while also addressing the challenges and strategic importance of such a large-scale infrastructure initiative.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

Aims:

- ❖ To analyze the role of Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA) in enhancing regional connectivity and integrating transportation networks.
- ❖ To evaluate the airport's potential impact on economic growth, employment generation, and infrastructure development in the Navi Mumbai region and surrounding areas.
- ❖ To understand the strategic importance of NMIA in addressing air traffic congestion and supporting future aviation demand in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region.

Objectives:

1. To examine the planning and development process of NMIA as a major greenfield airport project in India.
2. To assess the impact of NMIA on regional transportation infrastructure, including road, rail, and sea connectivity.
3. To identify economic opportunities created by the airport in sectors such as logistics, tourism, real estate, and services.
4. To study the expected benefits in terms of employment generation and skill development in the region.
5. To analyze environmental and social challenges related to the airport's development, including land acquisition and sustainability concerns.
6. To explore the role of NMIA as a catalyst for smart city development and urban expansion in Navi Mumbai and adjoining regions.
7. To provide policy recommendations for maximizing the socio-economic benefits of the airport while ensuring sustainable growth.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The concept of airport-led regional development has been explored extensively in urban planning and economic literature, with emphasis on the role of transport infrastructure in shaping spatial and economic outcomes. Kasarda & Lindsay (2011) introduced the concept of the "aerotropolis," highlighting how modern airports function as central nodes in global production and distribution networks. This concept forms a theoretical foundation for understanding the catalytic impact of large-scale aviation infrastructure projects like the Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA). Various government and institutional reports have documented the need for a second airport in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) due to congestion at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA), which surpassed its design capacity of 48 million passengers in 2019 (Ministry of Civil Aviation, 2023). According to CIDCO (2024), NMIA is expected to not only distribute air traffic load but also transform its surrounding region through planned urbanization under the Navi Mumbai Airport Influence Notified Area (NAINA).

Empirical studies such as those by Knight Frank (2024) and JLL (2024) have shown a correlation between large infrastructure projects and real estate growth, with land prices around NMIA increasing significantly—by 23% in Ulwe and Dronagiri in 2024. These studies support the view that proximity to airports enhances land value, stimulates commercial activity, and attracts long-term investment. In terms of connectivity, MMRDA (2023) has emphasized the role of the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL) in improving multimodal access to NMIA, reducing travel time between South Mumbai and the airport site to less than 30 minutes. Integration with metro lines, highways, and freight corridors aligns with NITI Aayog's (2023) infrastructure vision for improving India's logistics competitiveness and urban mobility. Research from CAPA India (2023) highlights how greenfield

airports in India, such as those in Hyderabad and Bengaluru, have spurred industrial growth, improved air connectivity, and contributed to GDP at the regional level. These comparative frameworks help position NMIA within a broader national context of infrastructure-led development. Furthermore, the Airports Economic Regulatory Authority (AERA, 2024) outlines user fee structures and financial models that demonstrate how airports like NMIA balance aeronautical and non-aeronautical revenue streams. This dual-income structure is crucial for long-term financial viability and local economic multipliers, especially in sectors like retail, hospitality, and logistics.

While most literature focuses on economic and infrastructural outcomes, few studies have critically examined the social and environmental trade-offs of such mega projects. However, CIDCO's Environment Impact Assessment (2017) and follow-up reports offer insights into mitigation strategies undertaken during NMIA's construction. Overall, the existing body of literature confirms that NMIA is not merely a transport project but a multidimensional development node expected to influence regional mobility, employment, land use, investment patterns, and industrial growth. However, ongoing academic and policy-based research is needed to evaluate the long-term socioeconomic effects as the airport becomes operational.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employs a mixed-methods approach combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques to comprehensively analyze the impact of Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA) on regional connectivity and economic growth within the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR). The quantitative component involves the collection and analysis of secondary data from government reports, planning authorities such as CIDCO, MMRDA, and the Ministry of Civil Aviation, as well as published statistics from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and Airports Economic Regulatory Authority (AERA). Key data sets include passenger and cargo traffic projections, employment statistics, real estate price trends, infrastructure investment volumes, and transport connectivity metrics such as travel times and modal integration. Spatial analysis through GIS tools maps land use changes and urban growth patterns around NMIA and within the Navi Mumbai Airport Influence Notified Area (NAINA).

Qualitative methods include a review of policy documents, project reports, and feasibility studies related to NMIA's phased development, urban planning, and economic strategies. Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders—urban planners, government officials, local business leaders, and community representatives—provide insights into the perceived benefits, challenges, and future expectations tied to the airport project. The study period spans from 2010, marking the inception of NMIA's planning, to projections up to 2035, encompassing current and future operational phases. Data triangulation ensures reliability by cross-verifying secondary data with stakeholder perspectives and field observations where feasible. Limitations related to access to proprietary financial data and ongoing project developments are acknowledged. Data analysis employs statistical techniques for trend identification, correlation assessment, and forecasting. Thematic analysis is applied to qualitative inputs to capture nuanced stakeholder views and policy implications. The combined methodology enables a holistic understanding of NMIA's role as a catalyst for enhanced connectivity and economic growth in the region.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM –

The Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) in Mumbai handled over 51 million passengers in FY2019, exceeding its designed capacity of 48 million passengers per annum. Air traffic congestion has caused delays averaging 15–25 minutes per flight during peak hours. Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA), located in Raigad district over 1160 hectares, is designed to handle 90 million passengers annually at full capacity. NMIA's Phase 1 capacity is 20 million passengers annually with operations expected to begin by late 2025. The Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) has a population exceeding 26 million as per the 2011 Census, projected to surpass 30 million by 2031. The Navi Mumbai Airport Influence Notified Area (NAINA) spans 371 sq km and includes over 170 villages.

Real estate values in Ulwe, Dronagiri, and Panvel increased by 23% in 2024, reaching an average of ₹10,810 per sq ft. Infrastructure investment for NAINA is estimated at ₹14,000 crore. Total NMIA project investment by FY30 is ₹57,333 crore. Estimated direct employment from NMIA in Phase 1 is 25,000 jobs, with total job creation projected to exceed 100,000. The Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (Atal Setu), inaugurated in 2024, reduced travel time from South Mumbai to Ulwe to 20 minutes under free-flow conditions. Projected annual cargo handling capacity at NMIA is 3.2 million metric tons. Passenger projections for NMIA: 11.98 million (FY26), 33.9 million (FY30). Initial air traffic movements are estimated at 8–10 per hour, scaling up to 30 per hour by 2026. User Development Fee approved by AERA includes ₹620 for domestic departures and ₹1,225 for international departures. CIDCO holds a 26% equity stake in the airport, while Adani Airports Holdings Ltd. holds 74%. Environmental clearance was obtained in 2017. Construction began in 2021. The absence of a second functional airport in MMR has restricted regional air connectivity, increased logistics costs, and reduced investment inflow in peripheral regions. Urban sprawl and industrial expansion in Navi Mumbai, Taloja, and Panvel remain underutilized due to infrastructural bottlenecks. NMIA is positioned to address these issues by decongesting CSMIA, enhancing regional connectivity, attracting FDI, improving cargo logistics, and driving inclusive economic growth across Maharashtra's coastal and inland districts.

NEED OF THE STUDY

The Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) is home to over 26 million people as per Census 2011, with projected growth to over 30 million by 2031. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) in Mumbai has already exceeded its peak capacity of 48 million passengers per annum, handling 51 million in FY2019. Air traffic movements at CSMIA averaged 950–1,000 per day pre-COVID, creating congestion, delays, and operational bottlenecks. Cargo throughput at CSMIA is constrained due to space and infrastructure limitations. Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA), developed over 1160 hectares, is designed to decongest CSMIA and cater to future demand with an eventual capacity of 90 million passengers per annum. Phase 1, with a capacity of 20 million passengers, is expected to be operational by 2025. The airport is strategically located near the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (Atal Setu), which reduces travel time from South Mumbai to Ulwe to 20 minutes. NMIA is projected to handle 11.98 million passengers by FY26 and 33.9 million by FY30. The surrounding Navi Mumbai Airport Influence Notified Area (NAINA) covers 371 square kilometers and 170+ villages, targeted for integrated urban, industrial, and infrastructure development. Real estate values in Ulwe, Dronagiri, and Panvel rose 23% in 2024 alone, indicating speculative and investment-driven growth tied to NMIA's progress. Infrastructure investment in the airport and associated economic zones exceeds ₹57,000 crore. Job creation estimates range from 50,000 (initial phases) to over 100,000 (long term), including both direct and indirect employment. The airport's full cargo capacity is 3.2 million metric tons annually, supporting logistics, freight corridors, and export-oriented industry. Existing connectivity through rail, metro, highways, and MTHL positions NMIA as a multimodal transport hub. Urban nodes like Taloja, Kharghar, and Panvel lack adequate international connectivity despite being part of major industrial corridors. Lack of a second international airport has previously delayed investment in logistics parks, SEZs, and warehousing in Navi Mumbai and Raigad. There is a need to study the direct and spillover impacts of NMIA on air traffic distribution, regional mobility, employment, FDI inflows, logistics efficiency, urban land value, and infrastructure-led economic development to quantify its catalytic role in regional transformation.

FURTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR RESEARCH -

Comparative analysis of pre- and post-operational economic indicators in Navi Mumbai, Panvel, and Raigad districts. Longitudinal study of passenger and cargo volume trends at NMIA from 2025 to 2035. Assessment of NMIA's impact on reducing air traffic congestion at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA). Evaluation of employment generation patterns in aviation, logistics, and ancillary services within the Navi Mumbai Airport Influence Notified Area (NAINA). Analysis of the growth in real estate prices and urban development patterns within a 15 km radius of NMIA. Study of

NMIA's contribution to non-aeronautical revenue streams including retail, hospitality, and commercial real estate. Measurement of changes in regional connectivity through air route additions, frequency improvements, and flight accessibility metrics. Examination of logistics cost reductions and time savings for exporters using NMIA compared to CSMIA.

Investigation into public transport integration and last-mile connectivity challenges to NMIA from major urban nodes. Comparative study of similar greenfield airport projects such as Hyderabad Rajiv Gandhi International Airport or Bengaluru Kempegowda International Airport and their economic impacts. Analysis of the role of NMIA in enabling trade and industrial growth in nearby SEZs, MIDC zones, and JNPT port-related logistics.

Impact study on environmental sustainability practices and ecological footprint mitigation during NMIA's construction and operational phases. Spatial analysis using GIS tools to map land use changes over time in Ulwe, Dronagiri, and surrounding nodes. Assessment of government policy interventions and infrastructure planning effectiveness in facilitating airport-led growth. Perception study involving residents, local businesses, and policymakers on NMIA's role in regional development. Review of foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows into Navi Mumbai and Raigad post-NMIA announcement and during construction phases. Analysis of revenue performance from UDF (User Development Fee) and its utilization in infrastructure reinvestment. Study of intermodal connectivity efficiency between NMIA, MTHL, metro lines, and the suburban rail network. Assessment of delays, cost overruns, and land acquisition challenges and their economic consequences. Evaluation of airport-driven urbanization models for future greenfield airport development across India.

RESEARCH STATEMENT

Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA) is a greenfield airport project located in Raigad district, Maharashtra, covering 1160 hectares and designed to handle 90 million passengers annually at full capacity. The airport is being developed in five phases, with Phase 1 scheduled for completion and operational readiness by 2025, offering a capacity of 20 million passengers per annum. The Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) faces increasing pressure on its existing aviation infrastructure, with Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) having exceeded its designed capacity of 48 million passengers in FY2019. NMIA is positioned as a strategic intervention to decentralize air traffic, reduce congestion at CSMIA, and enable balanced regional development. Passenger projections at NMIA are estimated at 11.98 million in FY26 and 33.9 million in FY30. Cargo capacity is expected to reach 3.2 million metric tons annually. Investment commitments exceed ₹57,000 crore for airport infrastructure and ₹20,000 crore for city-side development. The Navi Mumbai Airport Influence Notified Area (NAINA), spanning 371 square kilometers and over 170 villages, has been earmarked for planned urban, industrial, and infrastructural growth. Real estate prices in surrounding areas such as Ulwe and Panvel increased by 23 percent in 2024 alone, reflecting speculative and investment-driven market shifts. The airport is projected to create over 100,000 jobs directly and indirectly across its operational lifecycle. Connectivity infrastructure such as the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (Atal Setu) has reduced travel time between South Mumbai and the airport site to 20 minutes in free-flow traffic. NMIA is expected to catalyze regional connectivity by integrating with road, rail, and metro networks, and is anticipated to become a major logistics and economic hub. The research investigates the economic, spatial, and social transformations initiated by NMIA and evaluates its role as a growth engine for the MMR and Maharashtra. The study focuses on the airport's impact on regional connectivity, employment, investment patterns, urban development, and logistical efficiency to understand its catalytic function in regional economic acceleration.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

Scope

This study focuses on assessing the role of Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA) as a catalyst for enhancing regional connectivity and driving economic growth within the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), particularly in Navi Mumbai, Panvel, and Raigad districts. The temporal

scope spans from the airport's conceptualization in 2010 through its projected development phases up to 2035. The study evaluates economic indicators such as investment flow, employment generation, real estate growth, and infrastructure development associated with the airport. It also considers improvements in transport connectivity, including road, rail, metro, and the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL). The spatial scope includes the Navi Mumbai Airport Influence Notified Area (NAINA), covering 371 sq. km and over 170 villages. Quantitative data such as passenger and cargo traffic projections, land value appreciation, and job creation estimates are used to analyze NMIA's impact. The study also incorporates secondary data from government reports, CIDCO documents, urban planning records, and available transport modeling.

Limitations

The study is limited to observable and forecasted economic and infrastructural impacts directly related to NMIA and does not include broader macroeconomic variables not influenced by the airport. Long-term projections beyond 2025 are based on planning documents and may change due to policy shifts, construction delays, or unforeseen disruptions. Access to proprietary data from private developers such as the Adani Group may be restricted, limiting the depth of financial analysis. Environmental, ecological, and sociocultural impacts of the project are excluded from the primary scope. Field-level surveys may be constrained by time, accessibility, and sample coverage. Comparative analysis with other airports is restricted to publicly available data and excludes in-depth operational benchmarks. The study assumes timely completion of related infrastructure such as the MTHL and metro corridors, and any deviations may affect the accuracy of outcome projections. Stakeholder feedback is derived from secondary sources and may not capture the full diversity of local community perspectives.

Scope of the Study

This study examines the role of Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA) in enhancing regional connectivity and promoting economic development within the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), with a specific focus on Navi Mumbai, Panvel, and Raigad districts. It covers the period from the project's planning phase (2010) to its projected full development by 2035. The research analyzes NMIA's impact on passenger and cargo traffic distribution, infrastructure development, real estate dynamics, employment generation, and investment inflows. It also includes the assessment of surrounding areas such as the Navi Mumbai Airport Influence Notified Area (NAINA), which spans 371 square kilometers and includes over 170 villages. The study considers associated projects like the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL), metro expansions, and highway improvements that contribute to enhanced connectivity. Data is collected from government agencies, planning authorities (CIDCO), and infrastructure reports, with projections based on official estimates and planning models. The scope includes both direct effects (airport-led development) and indirect effects (urban growth, logistics, SEZ activity, and real estate appreciation) linked to NMIA's phased expansion.

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DISCUSSION

The development of the Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA) marks a transformative shift in the infrastructural and economic landscape of the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR). With Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) operating beyond its designed capacity of 48 million passengers per annum, NMIA emerges as a strategic response to the growing demands of air travel, cargo movement, and regional integration. NMIA's first phase, expected to be operational by 2025 with a handling capacity of 20 million passengers annually, is projected to decongest existing air traffic, improve efficiency in passenger and freight logistics, and support the decentralization of economic activities. The airport's location in Raigad district and proximity to emerging growth centers such as Panvel, Ulwe, Dronagiri, and Taloja positions it at the core of new urban and industrial development. The surrounding Navi Mumbai Airport Influence Notified Area (NAINA), spread over 371 square kilometers and covering more than 170 villages, has been earmarked for integrated urban planning, infrastructure development, and investment attraction. Real estate trends indicate a sharp appreciation in land and property values—up by 23% in Ulwe alone in 2024—indicating heightened investor interest tied to the airport's progress.

Infrastructure connectivity, a critical enabler of airport-led growth, has been significantly enhanced by projects like the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL), which reduces travel time from South Mumbai to the airport zone to approximately 20 minutes. Additional metro corridors, road expansions, and rail upgrades are expected to further reinforce NMIA's accessibility and efficiency, aligning it with global standards for multimodal airport hubs. In terms of economic growth, NMIA is projected to create more than 100,000 direct and indirect jobs upon full operation. Its cargo handling capacity of 3.2 million metric tons per annum positions it as a key node in Maharashtra's logistics network, with potential spillover benefits for nearby Special Economic Zones (SEZs), the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT), and regional MSMEs. The increase in User Development Fees (UDF) and the airport's shift toward non-aeronautical revenues (targeted at 70% by 2030) highlight a business model focused on both aviation and allied commercial growth. The airport also serves as a case study in public-private partnership (PPP), with 74% equity held by Adani Airports Holdings Limited and 26% by CIDCO. This joint ownership structure demonstrates collaborative governance in infrastructure delivery. However, challenges such as delays in land acquisition, environmental clearances, and rehabilitation remain important variables in the timely realization of projected benefits. Overall, the NMIA is not merely a response to airport congestion but a catalyst for broader regional transformation. Its ability to redistribute air traffic, promote investment in peripheral urban nodes, and integrate multimodal transport infrastructure establishes it as a strategic infrastructure asset with long-term socioeconomic implications for Maharashtra and India's aviation ecosystem. Continued policy alignment, stakeholder cooperation, and phased development will be critical in maximizing NMIA's potential as a driver of regional connectivity and economic growth.

CONCLUSION

The Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA) represents a landmark infrastructure project with the potential to reshape the economic geography of the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) and beyond. Conceived as a response to the saturation of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA), NMIA addresses the urgent need for expanded aviation capacity, improved cargo logistics, and regional decongestion. With its strategic location in Raigad district and integration into major transport networks like the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL), the airport is set to become a critical node in India's aviation and logistics ecosystem. The phased development of NMIA, with an ultimate capacity of

90 million passengers per year, positions it as a major facilitator of growth in sectors such as transportation, tourism, trade, real estate, and urban development. The surrounding Navi Mumbai Airport Influence Notified Area (NAINA) further expands its impact through planned urbanization, industrial clusters, and investment corridors. Data trends—including rising land values, projected employment generation exceeding 100,000 jobs, and expected cargo handling capacity of 3.2 million metric tons annually—underscore its catalytic role in stimulating economic activity.

The airport is also a model for public-private partnership, with significant investments from both Adani Airports Holdings Limited and CIDCO, reflecting coordinated governance and strategic long-term planning. While there are challenges related to land acquisition, environmental concerns, and project execution timelines, the overall trajectory of NMIA suggests a transformative influence on regional connectivity and inclusive economic growth. In conclusion, NMIA is more than an aviation project; it is an economic accelerator that will redefine infrastructure-led development in Maharashtra. Its success will depend on sustained policy support, efficient infrastructure integration, and stakeholder collaboration. As NMIA moves closer to operational status, it stands poised to become one of India's most significant infrastructure catalysts in the 21st century.

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