

Branding Telangana as a Heritage and Leisure Tourism Destination: A Marketing Perspective

Jonnalagadda Ramanaiah¹, Dr. L.C Panjabi²

¹Research Scholar, School of Commerce & Management, Career Point University, Kota (Raj.)

²Research Supervisor, School of Commerce & Management, Career Point University, Kota (Raj.)

Abstract:

Telangana, one of India's fastest-developing states, has recently intensified efforts to brand itself as a heritage and leisure tourism destination through strategic investments, policy reforms, and targeted marketing initiatives. In 2023, the state attracted approximately 58.6 million tourists, combining domestic and international visitors, illustrating the effectiveness of heritage-led tourism promotion such as the global positioning of Ramappa Temple following its UNESCO World Heritage designation and urban-leisure offerings in Hyderabad. Notwithstanding strong domestic traffic, international arrivals remain modest — with around 1.6 lakh foreign tourists in 2023, highlighting the need for stronger global branding and diversified products. Telangana's proactive tourism strategy includes ambitious targets under the Telangana Tourism Policy 2025– 2030 to attract ₹15,000 crore in investments, generate three lakh jobs, and elevate tourism's contribution to over 10 % of the state's GSDP. Complementing these policy targets, the state secured approximately ₹22,000 crore in proposed tourism investments in 2025, demonstrating significant private sector confidence in the sector's growth potential. These figures underscore Telangana's transition from an emerging to a more mature tourism destination and provide a quantitative foundation for branding strategies that leverage heritage assets, cultural festivals, urban leisure experiences, and digital marketing to enhance global destination visibility. The main objective is to study the Branding the Telangana as a Heritage and Leisure Tourism Destination and the policy.

Keywords: Branding, Heritage, Leisure, Marketing Strategies and Tourism policy.

1. Introduction

Tourism has emerged as one of the most dynamic sectors contributing to regional economic development, cultural preservation, employment generation, and global image building. In recent years, destination branding has become a critical tool through which regions differentiate themselves in an increasingly competitive tourism market. Within this context,

Indian states are actively repositioning their tourism identities by leveraging unique cultural, historical, and leisure-based assets. Telangana, the youngest state of India, presents a compelling case of how a region with rich heritage resources and modern urban infrastructure can strategically brand itself as a heritage and leisure tourism destination.

Telangana sees millions of domestic tourists and hundreds of thousands of international visitors, with significant growth, as seen by Hyderabad Airport handling over 352,000 foreign tourists in 2023 and aiming for even higher numbers, reflecting a booming tourism sector driven by cultural sites like Charminar and Ramoji Film City.

- **Domestic Tourists:** In 2021, Telangana hosted around 32 million domestic tourists, a number that grew to nearly 39.5 million by July 2022, with projections for even larger increases.
- **Foreign Tourists:** Hyderabad Airport recorded 352,274 foreign tourist arrivals in 2023, up from 296,123 in 2022, indicating strong recovery and growth.
- **Overall Growth:** Tourism authorities expected a substantial 20-30% increase in foreign and domestic arrivals for 2023 compared to 2022.

Since its formation in 2014, Telangana has undertaken systematic efforts to integrate tourism into its broader economic development agenda. The state possesses a diverse portfolio of tourism resources, including ancient temples, medieval forts, Islamic architectural heritage, lakes, waterfalls, forest landscapes, festivals, culinary traditions, and modern leisure attractions. Iconic sites such as Charminar, Golconda Fort, Qutb Shahi Tombs, Warangal Fort, and the UNESCO-listed Ramappa Temple reflect Telangana's deep-rooted historical and architectural legacy, while destinations like Ramoji Film City, Hussain Sagar, Necklace Road, and urban entertainment hubs of Hyderabad cater to contemporary leisure tourism demand.

2. Objective

(a) The main objective is to study the Branding the Telangana as a Heritage and Leisure Tourism Destination and the policy.

(b) To study the recent growth and trends in telangana tourism

3. Telangana Tourism Policy 2025–2030

The Telangana Tourism Policy 2025–2030 represents a landmark initiative by the

Government of Telangana aimed at transforming tourism into a key driver of economic growth, employment generation, and global destination branding. Since the formation of the state in 2014, Telangana has steadily recognized tourism as a strategic sector capable of leveraging its rich historical legacy, vibrant culture, natural landscapes, and rapidly modernizing urban infrastructure. The new policy marks a shift from fragmented tourism development to a comprehensive, investment-driven, and market-oriented framework that seeks to position Telangana among the top tourism destinations in India. The policy is grounded in the understanding that tourism is not merely a recreational activity but a multi-sectoral industry with strong linkages to hospitality, transport, handicrafts, culture, and local livelihoods.

One of the central objectives of the Telangana Tourism Policy 2025–2030 is to attract ₹15,000 crore in tourism investments over a five-year period while generating approximately three lakh employment opportunities across the tourism value chain. The policy also aspires to increase tourism's contribution to the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) to over 10 percent, reflecting the government's intention to elevate tourism from a supplementary sector to a core economic pillar. These goals are particularly significant in light of the state's strong domestic tourism base, with over 58 million tourist visits recorded in recent years, and comparatively lower foreign tourist arrivals, which the policy seeks to address through focused international branding and infrastructure upgrades.

The policy adopts a diversified tourism development strategy, recognizing that Telangana's competitive advantage lies in its ability to offer a blend of heritage, leisure, cultural, eco, wellness, film, and urban tourism experiences. Heritage tourism forms a foundational pillar of the policy, with special emphasis on globally recognized and regionally significant sites such as the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Ramappa Temple, Charminar, Golconda Fort, Qutb Shahi Tombs, and Warangal Fort. Rather than promoting these monuments as isolated attractions, the policy encourages integrated destination development through heritage circuits, interpretative centres, sound-and-light shows, and immersive visitor experiences that enhance cultural

appreciation and length of tourist stay. By aligning heritage conservation with tourism promotion, the policy seeks to balance preservation with economic utilization.

Leisure tourism is another key focus area of the policy, particularly in and around Hyderabad, which is envisioned as a gateway destination combining heritage, gastronomy, nightlife, shopping, and entertainment. The policy promotes the development of waterfront tourism, lakefront recreation, amusement parks, and family-oriented leisure destinations, with Ramoji Film City serving as a flagship example of large-scale leisure tourism. Weekend tourism and short-stay travel are actively encouraged through improved connectivity, urban amenities, and marketing campaigns targeting domestic tourists from neighboring states. This approach reflects changing tourist preferences, where experiential and leisure-based travel increasingly complements traditional sightseeing.

4. Branding Strategies

4.1 Strategic Destination Marketing and Global Visibility Campaigns

Telangana has strengthened its global tourism presence through integrated destination marketing initiatives outlined in the Tourism Policy 2025–2030. By combining digital campaigns, international travel fairs, and high-visibility global events such as Miss World 2025 in Hyderabad, the state projects itself as a modern, safe, and culturally vibrant destination, enhancing both domestic and international awareness. The following are the key developments.

- Integrated digital and offline branding under Tourism Policy 2025–2030
- Participation in international travel fairs and global promotions
- Hosting global events like Miss World 2025

4.2 Culinary and Experiential Tourism Branding

Leveraging Hyderabad's UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy status, Telangana promotes culinary tourism as a core branding element. Through TCETA, regional cuisines beyond biryani are integrated into heritage and leisure circuits, linking food, culture, and local identity to immersive visitor experiences and product diversification. The following are the key developments.

- UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy (Hyderabad)

- Telangana Culinary and Experiential Tourism Accelerator (TCETA)
- Integration of local cuisine into tourism circuits

4.3 Festival-Led and Cultural Branding

Festival-led branding highlights Telangana's living cultural heritage. Events like Bathukamma and Bonalu are marketed as iconic cultural experiences through tours, competitions, and international promotions, reinforcing the state's image as a vibrant destination rooted in tradition rather than static heritage monuments.

- Promotion of Bathukamma and Bonalu festivals
- Domestic and global cultural marketing
- Engagement of diaspora and media platforms

4.4 Digital Innovation and Smart Tourism Tools

To attract tech-savvy and international travellers, Telangana has adopted smart tourism tools such as unified portals, GIS mapping, and digital travel cards. These initiatives improve destination accessibility, planning convenience, and overall tourist experience through technology-driven engagement. The following are the key developments.

- Unified Online Tourism Portal
- GIS-based attraction mapping
- Digital travel cards and cashless access

4.5 Safety-First Branding through Tourist Police Deployment

Safety forms a key pillar of Telangana's tourism branding. The deployment of specialised tourist police across major destinations reinforces the state's image as a secure travel environment, particularly for families and international visitors, encouraging repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth promotion. The following are the key developments.

- Dedicated tourist police force
- Coverage of major heritage and leisure destinations
- Enhanced traveller confidence

4.6 Public-Private Partnerships and Infrastructure Branding

Through public-private partnerships, Telangana is developing premium tourism infrastructure such as lake cruises, wellness retreats, vineyard resorts, and wildlife experiences. Collaborations

with private entities further support accessibility and service quality, strengthening the state's modern and experience-rich brand image. The following are the key development.

- ₹15,000+ crore tourism infrastructure projects
- Premium leisure and wellness experiences
- Partnerships with private service providers

5. Conclusion

The branding of Telangana's branding as a heritage and leisure tourism destination has delivered encouraging results, reflected in strong growth in domestic and international tourist arrivals. Strategic integration of heritage sites, festivals, cuisine, leisure attractions, and modern infrastructure has strengthened its destination appeal. Domestic tourism remains the backbone, driven by improved connectivity, circuit-based destinations, and weekend travel from Hyderabad, while international arrivals are steadily rising due to global visibility of iconic attractions and urban safety. Supported by the Tourism Policy 2025–2030, Telangana's experience-oriented branding demonstrates how heritage and leisure integration can create a competitive, sustainable, and inclusive tourism economy.

References

1. Government of Telangana. (2025). *Telangana Tourism Policy 2025–2030*. Department of Tourism, Government of Telangana, Hyderabad.
2. Government of Telangana, Department of Tourism. (2023). *Tourism statistics and development initiatives in Telangana*. Hyderabad: Government of Telangana.
3. Government of India, Ministry of Tourism. (2022). *India tourism statistics at a glance*. New Delhi: Ministry of Tourism.
4. Hyderabad International Airport Limited (HIAL). (2023). *Annual traffic and tourism movement report*. Hyderabad.
5. Indian Express. (2023). Telangana tourism records strong post-pandemic growth with increased domestic and foreign arrivals. *The Indian Express*.
6. New Indian Express. (2025). Telangana unveils ambitious tourism policy aiming ₹15,000 crore investment and 3 lakh jobs. *The New Indian Express*.
7. Times of India. (2023). Hyderabad airport sees sharp rise in foreign tourist arrivals in 2023. *The Times of India*, Hyderabad Edition.
8. Times of India. (2024). Telangana government pushes festival-led tourism branding through Bathukamma and Bonalu. *The Times of India*.

9. UNESCO. (2021). *Ramappa Temple (Rudreshwara), Telangana – World Heritage Listing*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. <https://whc.unesco.org>
10. UNESCO. (2023). *Creative Cities Network: Hyderabad – City of Gastronomy*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
11. World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). (2022). *Destination branding and sustainable tourism development*. Madrid: UNWTO.
12. Jenkins, O. H. (2015). Destination branding: The role of regional culture and heritage. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 32(1–2), 1–14.
13. Pike, S., & Page, S. J. (2014). Destination marketing organizations and destination marketing: A narrative analysis of the literature. *Tourism Management*, 41, 202–227.
14. Kotler, P., Bowen, J. T., & Makens, J. C. (2017). *Marketing for hospitality and tourism* (7th ed.). Pearson Education, New Delhi.
15. Ashworth, G., & Tunbridge, J. (2000). *The tourist-historic city: Retrospect and prospect of managing the heritage city*. Oxford: Pergamon Press. Hall, C. M. (2019). *Tourism planning: Policies, processes and relationships*. Routledge, London.