

The Impact of Festivals and Cultural Heritage on Tourism Development in Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract: This research paper examines the contribution of festivals and cultural heritage to tourism development in Andhra Pradesh during the study period from January 2020 to December 2025. The study adopts a mixed-data research design integrating both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 265 respondents, while secondary data were obtained from the Annual Reports of the Ministry of Tourism, district-wise tourism footfall records of the Andhra Pradesh Tourism Authority, Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) reports, and the Ministry of Tourism's UTSAV event records. The Descriptive statistics, percentages, weighted means, standard deviations, chi-square goodness-of-fit tests, one-sample mean tests, time-trend correlation and regression, paired district tests, and tourism-concentration measures were employed for statistical analysis.

The findings reveal that domestic tourist visits to Andhra Pradesh increased from 70.83 million in 2020 to 333.83 million in 2025, representing an overall increase of 371.3% and a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 36.35%. A strong positive time trend was observed ($r = 0.985$, $p < .001$). However, the unusually low tourist base during the COVID-19 pandemic and the influence of other tourism-related factors prevent this growth from being attributed solely to festivals and cultural heritage. Primary data indicate high tourist recognition of Visakha Utsav (85.66%), Suryalanka Beach Festival (79.62%), and Lepakshi Festival and Sankranti Tourism Festival (74.72% each). Temples and religious sites recorded the highest mean score for cultural-heritage attractiveness ($M = 4.13/5$). Respondents also perceived festivals and cultural heritage as making a significant contribution to local income and employment ($M = 3.80/5$, $p < .001$), while the promotional efforts of Andhra Pradesh Tourism were positively evaluated ($M = 2.95/4$, $p < .001$).

The study concludes that festivals and cultural heritage serve as significant tourism-promotion, visitor-expenditure, destination-branding, and local-development assets in Andhra Pradesh. However, maximizing their tourism benefits requires improvements in transportation, crowd management, tourist information services, digital promotion, visitor facilities, and systematic event-level data collection and monitoring.

Keywords: Festival Tourism, Cultural Heritage, Andhra Pradesh Tourism Authority, Tourism Development, Pilgrimage Tourism, and Event Tourism

I. INTRODUCTION

Festivals convert living culture into time-bound tourism experiences by bringing together traditions, rituals, performing arts, local cuisine, handicrafts, religious practices, community participation, and social celebrations within a particular place and period. They create opportunities for tourists to directly experience the cultural character of a destination rather than merely observe it. Major religious, cultural, tribal, food, beach, and heritage festivals can attract visitors, increase tourist movement, extend the duration of stay, stimulate expenditure on accommodation, transportation, food, shopping, entertainment, and local services, and generate temporary as well as sustained employment opportunities for local communities.

Cultural heritage provides the tangible and intangible resources that give tourism destinations their distinct identity and sense of place. Tangible heritage includes temples, historical monuments, archaeological sites, traditional buildings, museums, sculptures, handicrafts, and cultural landscapes, while intangible heritage encompasses customs, rituals, festivals, folk dances, music, traditional knowledge, cuisine, beliefs, and community practices. Together, festivals and cultural heritage strengthen destination attractiveness and help differentiate one tourism destination from another.

The relationship between festivals, cultural heritage, and tourism development is therefore mutually reinforcing. Cultural heritage provides the historical and cultural foundation for tourism experiences, while festivals activate, interpret, and present this heritage in a dynamic and participatory form. Well-planned festivals can enhance destination visibility, strengthen place branding, encourage repeat visitation, promote local products and traditional arts, and distribute tourism benefits among local communities. At the same time, tourism can provide economic incentives for the conservation and promotion of cultural resources. However, sustainable festival and heritage tourism also requires effective visitor management, adequate infrastructure, transportation, sanitation, safety, interpretation services, community participation, and responsible promotion to ensure that tourism growth does not undermine the cultural authenticity and heritage values that attract visitors.

In Andhra Pradesh, these cultural and tourism resources range from the major pilgrimage traditions of Tirumala and Vijayawada to Buddhist heritage sites, historic forts, traditional crafts, tribal festivals, beach events, and regional tourism celebrations. These diverse attractions reflect the state's rich religious, historical, artistic, ecological, and community-based heritage and provide multiple opportunities for developing festival and cultural tourism across different regions. Religious festivals attract large numbers of pilgrims, while heritage festivals, craft fairs, tribal celebrations, coastal events, and regional cultural programmes help broaden the tourism experience beyond pilgrimage centres and promote lesser-known destinations.

Event tourism literature treats planned events as important tourism motivators and destination-marketing instruments capable of attracting visitors, extending stays, stimulating expenditure, and improving destination visibility (Getz, 2008). Similarly, cultural-tourism research emphasizes the growing visitor interest not only in built heritage such as temples, monuments, forts, and archaeological sites, but also in intangible cultural practices including festivals, rituals, cuisine, crafts, music, dance, and local traditions (Richards, 2018). In the context of Andhra Pradesh, the integration of festivals and cultural heritage can therefore support destination branding, regional tourism diversification, local economic development, cultural preservation, and stronger community participation in tourism.

The period from 2020 to 2025 is particularly significant for analysis because it encompasses the severe disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the gradual revival of domestic tourism and mobility, the resumption of large-scale religious and cultural gatherings, and the renewed emphasis of the state government on promoting tourism through mega events, food festivals, trade fairs, cultural programmes, and destination-based tourism activities. According to Ministry of Tourism records, domestic tourist visits to Andhra Pradesh increased from 70.83 million in 2020 to 333.83 million in 2025. However, this growth cannot be attributed solely to festivals and cultural events, as several other factors, including pilgrimage demand, the normalization of mobility following the COVID-19 pandemic, improvements in tourism infrastructure, destination promotion, and broader economic conditions, also influenced the overall trend. Therefore, the present study examines festivals and cultural heritage as important contributors to tourism development in Andhra Pradesh rather than assuming a direct causal relationship between festival activity and tourist growth.

The main challenge is that government agencies do not publish attendance data covering every festival in Andhra Pradesh. This study therefore triangulates three forms of evidence: (i) statewide and district-level tourist-visit statistics, (ii) government programme and event indicators, and (iii) a primary tourist perception survey. Such triangulation allows tourism growth, festival awareness, heritage attractiveness, expenditure effects, perceived local benefits, and destination-management constraints to be examined within a single research framework.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Table 1. Selected conceptual and empirical literature

Study	Focus	Relevance to the present study
Getz (2008)	Event tourism and destination development	Planned events can motivate travel and support destination marketing; event portfolios require strategic management.

Study	Focus	Relevance to the present study
Crompton & McKay (1997)	Visitor motivation at festivals	Cultural exploration and social/novelty motives help explain festival attendance and visitor behaviour.
Quinn (2006)	Festivals and sustainable development	Festivals produce economic and infrastructural effects but must also be understood as socially and culturally embedded events.
Timothy & Boyd (2003)	Heritage tourism	Heritage resources are tourism assets whose interpretation, conservation and visitor management shape destination outcomes.
Richards (2018)	Cultural-tourism trends	Cultural tourism has broadened from monuments toward intangible heritage, creativity, local culture and everyday cultural experiences.

The literature supports three propositions relevant to Andhra Pradesh. First, festivals can stimulate travel and destination visibility, but event success is dependent on management and local linkages. Second, cultural heritage includes not only monuments and temples but also food, crafts, music, rituals and community traditions. Third, sustainable festival tourism requires attention to congestion, resident benefits, conservation and service quality. These propositions guide the primary-data measures and the interpretation of official tourism trends in this study.

III. RESEARCH GAP

Most festival-tourism studies focus on a single event, a particular destination, or visitor motivations associated with a specific festival. Such studies are useful for understanding individual events, but they often do not provide a broader picture of how festivals and cultural heritage collectively contribute to tourism development over a longer period. In Andhra Pradesh the information relating to festivals, cultural programmes, tourist visits, and heritage-based tourism is dispersed across tourism statistics, outcome budgets, district-level records, UTSAV listings, and temple or event reports. This fragmented nature of the available data makes it difficult to assess the overall relationship between festival activity, cultural heritage, and tourism development at the state level.

There is limited integrated research covering the entire period from 2020 to 2025 while simultaneously examining: (a) statewide domestic and foreign tourist trends, (b) the intensity of government-supported festival and cultural programmes, (c) evidence relating to religious festivals and festivals organised or promoted by the tourism authority, (d) district-level spatial patterns of tourist visits, and (e) visitor perceptions concerning heritage attractiveness, tourism expenditure, employment generation, promotional effectiveness, and destination-management constraints. In particular, relatively little attention has been given to combining official secondary data with primary visitor-perception data within a single analytical framework. The present study addresses this research gap by adopting an integrated mixed-data approach that combines both primary and secondary data to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the contribution of festivals and cultural heritage to tourism development in Andhra Pradesh.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To analyse the trend and growth of domestic and foreign tourist visits to Andhra Pradesh during 2020-2025.
- To examine the role and visibility of festivals organised or promoted by Andhra Pradesh Tourism Authority and major religious-cultural events.
- To assess tourists' perceptions of festival influence, cultural-heritage attractiveness, tourism expenditure, local income/employment and promotion effectiveness.
- To evaluate festival-period tourism infrastructure and identify major constraints to festival and cultural-heritage tourism development.
- To recommend policy and destination-management measures for strengthening festival-led and heritage-led tourism in Andhra Pradesh.

V. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Null Hypotheses

H01: Festival and cultural events do not show a systematic influence on tourists' choice of destination and travel timing.

H02: Festivals and cultural heritage do not contribute above the neutral level to local income and employment opportunities.

H03: Andhra Pradesh Tourism's promotion of festivals and cultural events is not rated above the scale midpoint.

H04: Festival and cultural tourism do not contribute above the scale midpoint to the preservation and promotion of traditional culture and heritage.

H05: There is no statistically significant linear time trend in domestic tourist visits to Andhra Pradesh during 2020–2025.

Alternative Hypotheses

H11: Festival and cultural events show a systematic influence on tourists' choice of destination and travel timing.

H12: Festivals and cultural heritage contribute significantly above the neutral level to local income and employment opportunities.

H13: Andhra Pradesh Tourism's promotion of festivals and cultural events is rated significantly above the scale midpoint.

H14: Festival and cultural tourism contribute significantly above the scale midpoint to the preservation and promotion of traditional culture and heritage.

H15: There is a statistically significant linear time trend in domestic tourist visits to Andhra Pradesh during 2020–2025.

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design: The study employs a descriptive and analytical mixed-data research design to examine the contribution of festivals and cultural heritage to tourism development in Andhra Pradesh. The geographical scope of the study is confined to Andhra Pradesh, and the study period extends from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2025. Primary and secondary data are analyzed separately using appropriate statistical techniques and are subsequently integrated at the interpretation stage. This approach allows the study to draw meaningful conclusions from different forms of evidence without combining non-comparable datasets into a single causal model.

Primary data: Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire, resulting in 265 valid responses. The questionnaire was designed to measure respondents' frequency of visits for festivals and cultural events; the influence of religious festivals and Andhra Pradesh Tourism-promoted festivals on travel decisions; the effect of festivals on destination choice and travel timing; the importance and attractiveness of cultural heritage; perceptions of eight major heritage elements; the quality of festival-related tourism infrastructure; changes in tourism expenditure; contributions to local income and employment; the effectiveness of tourism promotion; the role of festival tourism in heritage preservation; willingness to recommend Andhra Pradesh as a festival and cultural-heritage destination; and the major challenges affecting the growth and quality of festival tourism.

Secondary data: Secondary data were obtained from multiple official sources. State-wise Domestic Tourist Visits (DTV) and Foreign Tourist Visits (FTV) for the period 2020–2025 were collected from the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, and State Tourism Department statistics. Information relating to selected festivals organized or promoted by Andhra Pradesh Tourism, including the Perupalem Beach Festival, Suryalanka Beach Festival, Lepakshi Festival, Gandikota Festival, Flamingo Festival, and Sankranti Tourism Festival, was also considered. In addition, data on selected pilgrimage and cultural events were drawn from reports of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD). District-wise tourist footfall data were obtained from the Andhra Pradesh Tourism Authority.

For the analysis of district-level tourism trends, comparisons were restricted to the period from 2020 to 2024 because complete annual district-wise tourist footfall data for 2025 were not available. The available district-level data for 2025 cover only the period from January to June and were therefore excluded from the full-year comparative analysis. Due consideration was also given to the administrative reorganization of Andhra Pradesh from 13 districts to 26 districts in 2022, which limits direct comparability of district-level data across the entire study period.

Statistical tools: Percentages, weighted means and standard deviations describe primary data. Chi-square goodness-of-fit tests evaluate whether ordinal response patterns are evenly distributed, while one-sample t-tests on coded ordinal scores are reported as robustness indicators against the scale midpoint. Statewide tourism is analysed using annual growth, CAGR, Pearson time correlation and ordinary least squares trend regression. District patterns use tourism shares, the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI) and paired 2023-2024 district mean tests. Statistical significance is assessed at the 5% level.

VII. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

7.1 Domestic and foreign tourist visits in Andhra Pradesh, 2020-2025

Year	DTV	DTV (million)	DTV growth	FTV	FTV growth
2020	70,828,590	70.83	—	67,591	—
2021	93,277,569	93.28	31.69%	27,551	-59.24%
2022	192,716,721	192.72	106.61%	165,845	501.96%
2023	254,706,328	254.71	32.17%	60,426	-63.56%
2024	290,266,452	290.27	13.96%	262,431	334.30%
2025	333,827,759	333.83	15.01%	226,311	-13.76%

Table 2. Domestic and foreign tourist visits in Andhra Pradesh, 2020-2025

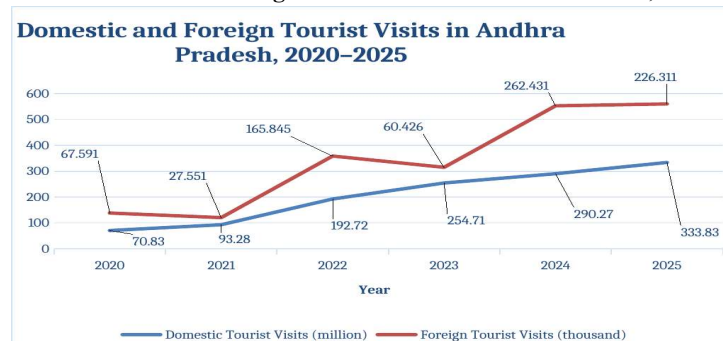


Figure 1. Trend in domestic and foreign tourist visits, Andhra Pradesh, 2020-2025

Source: Ministry of Tourism Annual reports.

Interpretation: Domestic tourist visits to Andhra Pradesh increased by approximately 371.32% during the study period, rising from 70.83 million in 2020 to 333.83 million in 2025. The compound annual growth rate (CAGR) for 2020–2025 was 36.35%; however, this rate should be interpreted cautiously because the 2020 figure represents an unusually low base resulting from COVID-19-related travel restrictions. Linear time-trend regression indicates an average fitted increase of approximately 56.23 million domestic tourist visits per year, with a very strong model fit ($R^2 = 0.971$, $p < .001$). In contrast, foreign tourist visits displayed considerable year-to-year fluctuations. Although the fitted trend for foreign tourist visits was positive, it was not statistically significant at the 5% level ($R^2 = 0.587$, $p = .075$).

7.2 Government Festival and Cultural-Programme Indicators

Financial year	Cultural celebrations budget	Tourism/APTA targets	Shilparamam targets
2020-21	₹83.33 lakh	13 mega festivals; 20 exhibitions/fairs/marts	300 cultural activities; 10 lakh footfall targets

Financial year	Cultural celebrations budget	Tourism/APTA targets	Shilparamam targets
2021-22	₹83.33 lakh	18 destination-promotion events; 6 Andhra food festivals; 20 exhibitions/fairs/marts	100 cultural activities; 6 lakh footfall targets
2022-23	₹83.33 lakh	1 international tourism exhibition; 1 summit	19 cultural activities
2023-24	₹83.33 lakh	25 sponsorships; 25 trade fairs	725 marketing/cultural activities (combined target)
2024-25	₹125.00 lakh	38 trade fairs; 40 mega events; 6 food festivals; 5 BITC events	25 marketing events; 700 cultural activities

Table 3. Selected Government of Andhra Pradesh festival/cultural promotion indicators

Interpretation: The programme indicators demonstrate continued use of festivals, fairs, food events and cultural activities as tourism-development instruments. The 2024-25 APTA programme targeted 40 mega events, six food festivals and 38 trade fairs, while Shilparamam targeted 700 cultural activities. These are physical targets rather than audited counts of completed events.

7.3 Andhra Pradesh Tourism-Organized/Promoted Festivals

Festival	Location	Tourism theme	Verified/official-period evidence
Perupalem Beach Festival	Perupalem / West Godavari coast	Beach, culture, food	First organised in 2020; official 15-16 Feb 2023 event
Suryalanka Beach Festival	Suryalanka, Bapatla	Beach, culture, sports	11-12 Jan 2023; culture, sports, food and beach activities
Lepakshi Festival	Lepakshi	Heritage, arts, crafts	7-8 Mar 2023; heritage, crafts, food and sales exhibitions
Gandikota Festival	Gandikota Fort	Heritage, folk culture	11-12 Jan 2023; folk arts, historical drama, crafts and cuisine
Flamingo Festival	Pulicat-Nelapattu region	Eco/wildlife, culture	3-5 Jan 2023; district festival also held 18-20 Jan 2025
Sankranti Tourism Festival	Vijayawada	Harvest, culture, food	13-16 Jan 2023; competitions, music/dance, handloom and food courts
Visakha Utsav	Visakhapatnam	Regional tourism/culture	December 27 to December 29, 2024, Annual tourism festival; heritage, food, exhibitions and performances
Lumbini Festival	Visakhapatnam Buddhist circuit	Buddhist heritage	December 12 to December 14, 2025, Government-supported cultural-tourism festival

Table 4. Festival portfolio relevant to Andhra Pradesh Tourism promotion

Interpretation: Beach festivals contribute to coastal tourism by attracting visitors through cultural programmes, recreational activities, local cuisine, and entertainment. Heritage-based events such as the Lepakshi Festival and Gandikota Festival combine historical attractions with traditional crafts, folk performances, exhibitions, and regional food, thereby enhancing the overall visitor experience. The Flamingo Festival integrates cultural activities with the ecological landscape of the Pulicat Lake–Nelapattu region and supports the promotion of nature-based and eco-tourism.

Similarly, Sankranti celebrations and Visakha Utsav bring together regional traditions, cuisine, music, dance, exhibitions, and entertainment, strengthening their appeal as broader tourism events.

This diversification of festival formats helps extend tourism activity beyond the state's major pilgrimage centres and creates opportunities for promoting coastal, heritage, ecological, and regional destinations. It can also support local businesses, artisans, performers, food vendors, and tourism service providers. However, a major limitation is the absence of consistent and comparable festival-wise attendance data for all events, which restricts precise measurement of the individual tourism impact of each festival.

7.4 Selected Religious and Cultural Event Evidence

Festival/event	Year	Tourism/statistical indicator
Srivari Brahmotsavam, Tirumala	2020	Festival conducted in Ekantham under COVID-19 restrictions; normal public congregation restricted.
Srivari Annual Brahmotsavam, Tirumala	2023	5.47 lakh pilgrims had darshan; >2 lakh witnessed Garuda Vahana Seva; 16.28 lakh meals/tiffin; Hundi ₹24.22 crore.
Tumburu Theertha Mukkoti, Tirumala	2023	36,200 devotees participated over two days.
Dasara Navaratri, Kanaka Durga Temple, Vijayawada	2024	More than 10 lakh devotees over ten days; about ₹5 crore temple revenue reported from tickets, prasadam and rituals.
Vaikuntha Dwara Darshan, Tirumala	2025	Large-scale ten-day pilgrim arrangements; secondary study records close to 7 lakh visitors for the period.
Garuda Vahana Seva, Tirumala	2025	Official TTD release reported more than 3 lakh participants.

Table 5. Selected religious-festival indicators during the study period

Interpretation: Table 5 shows that religious and cultural festivals in Andhra Pradesh generate substantial short-term tourist and pilgrim movement, particularly at Tirumala and Vijayawada. The 2020 Srivari Brahmotsavam was conducted under COVID-19 restrictions, with normal public congregation curtailed, illustrating the exceptional disruption caused by the pandemic. By contrast, the 2023–2025 period reflects a strong return of large-scale pilgrimage activity. In 2023, Srivari Annual Brahmotsavam attracted 5.47 lakh pilgrims for darshan, more than 2 lakh people witnessed Garuda Vahana Seva, and 16.28 lakh meals and tiffin servings were provided, indicating the scale of visitor demand and supporting services during the event. The reported Hundi collection of ₹24.22 crore further demonstrates the significant economic activity associated with major pilgrimage festivals.

Other events also recorded substantial participation. Tumburu Theertha Mukkoti attracted 36,200 devotees over two days in 2023, while Dasara Navaratri at Kanaka Durga Temple in 2024 drew more than 10 lakh devotees over ten days and generated about ₹5 crore in reported temple revenue from tickets, prasadam, and rituals. In 2025, Vaikuntha Dwara Darshan recorded close to 7 lakh visitors over the ten-day period, while Garuda Vahana Seva attracted more than 3 lakh participants.

Overall, these figures indicate that major religious festivals create concentrated tourism demand within a short period, increasing the need for transport, accommodation, food services, sanitation, security, crowd management, and other visitor facilities. They also contribute to local economic activity through spending, religious offerings, food services, and related tourism services. However, the sharp contrast between the restricted 2020 festival period and the large congregations recorded from 2023 onward shows that part of the increase reflects post-COVID tourism recovery.

7.5 Primary Survey: Participation, Festival Recognition

Survey indicator	Respondents	Share
Visit festivals/cultural destinations frequently or very frequently	148	55.85%

Survey indicator	Respondents	Share
Cultural heritage at least moderately important	209	78.87%
Festival influence on timing/destination: great or very great extent	103	38.87%
Festival attendance increased expenditure: significantly/moderately	181	68.30%
Local income/employment contribution: high/very high	179	67.55%
AP Tourism promotion: effective/very effective	195	73.59%
Festivals help preserve/promote heritage: agree/strongly agree	179	67.55%
Would definitely/probably recommend Andhra Pradesh	198	74.72%

Table 6. Selected primary-survey outcomes (N = 265)

Interpretation: Table 6 shows that festival and cultural-heritage tourism plays an important role in shaping tourism experiences in Andhra Pradesh. More than half of the respondents (55.85%) reported visiting festival or cultural destinations frequently or very frequently, showing a considerable level of participation. Cultural heritage was considered at least moderately important by 78.87% of respondents, highlighting its strong relevance in destination choice. However, only 38.87% stated that festivals influenced their destination choice or travel timing to a great or very great extent, suggesting that festivals often support rather than solely determine travel decisions. Festival participation also generated noticeable economic effects, as 68.30% reported a significant or moderate increase in tourism expenditure. Similarly, 67.55% believed that festivals and cultural heritage contribute to local income and employment to a high or very high extent. Andhra Pradesh Tourism's promotional efforts were positively evaluated, with 73.59% rating them effective or very effective. In addition, 67.55% agreed or strongly agreed that festivals help preserve and promote traditional culture and heritage. A high proportion of respondents (74.72%) also expressed a willingness to recommend Andhra Pradesh as a festival and cultural-heritage tourism destination. Overall, the results suggest that festivals and cultural heritage contribute positively to tourism participation, spending, local economic benefits, heritage preservation, promotion, and destination recommendation.

7.6 Religious festivals and pilgrimage events in Andhra Pradesh influenced tourists' and pilgrims' decisions to visit a destination.

Religious festival/event	Frequency	Percentage
Srivari Brahmotsavam, Tirumala	243	91.70%
Other religious festivals	238	89.81%
Dasara Navaratri, Vijayawada	226	85.28%
Vaikuntha Dwara Darshan, Tirumala	190	71.70%
Chandanotsavam, Simhachalam	187	70.57%
Modakondamma Jathara	126	47.55%
Gangamma Jatara	124	46.79%

Table 7. Religious-festival influence/recognition (multiple responses; N = 265)

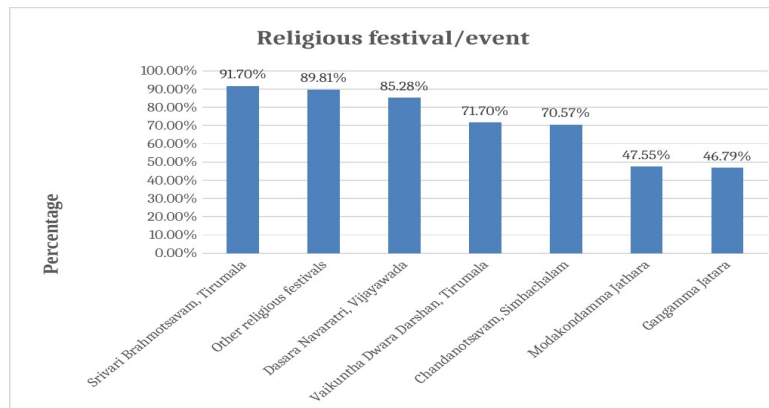


Figure 2. Religious festivals and pilgrimage events in Andhra Pradesh

Interpretation: The figure shows that Srivari Brahmotsavam, Tirumala recorded the highest influence on tourists' and pilgrims' decisions to visit a destination, with 91.70% of respondents identifying it as an important religious event. This was followed by other religious festivals (89.81%) and Dasara Navaratri at Vijayawada (85.28%), indicating the strong role of major religious celebrations in motivating travel. Vaikuntha Dwara Darshan, Tirumala (71.70%) and Chandanotsavam, Simhachalam (70.57%) also showed a substantial level of influence among respondents. In comparison, Modakondamma Jathara (47.55%) and Gangamma Jatara (46.79%) recorded relatively lower percentages, although nearly half of the respondents still recognised their influence. Overall, the results indicate that major pilgrimage festivals, particularly those associated with Tirumala and Vijayawada, have a strong influence on religious tourism movements in Andhra Pradesh. The findings also suggest that regional and local festivals have tourism potential but may require greater promotion, visibility, and destination-level marketing to attract a wider tourist base.

7.7 Festivals organized or promoted by Andhra Pradesh Tourism Authority

Rank	Andhra Pradesh Tourism Festival / Event	Frequency	Percentage
1	Visakha Utsav	227	85.66%
2	Suryalanka Beach Festival	211	79.62%
3	Lepakshi Festival	198	74.72%
3	Sankranti Tourism Festival, Vijayawada	198	74.72%
5	Flamingo Festival	191	72.08%
6	Gandikota Festival	178	67.17%
7	Other Andhra Pradesh Tourism Festival	167	63.02%
8	Perupalem Beach Festival	140	52.83%
9	Lumbini Festival	97	36.60%

Table 8. Festivals organized or promoted by Andhra Pradesh Tourism Authority

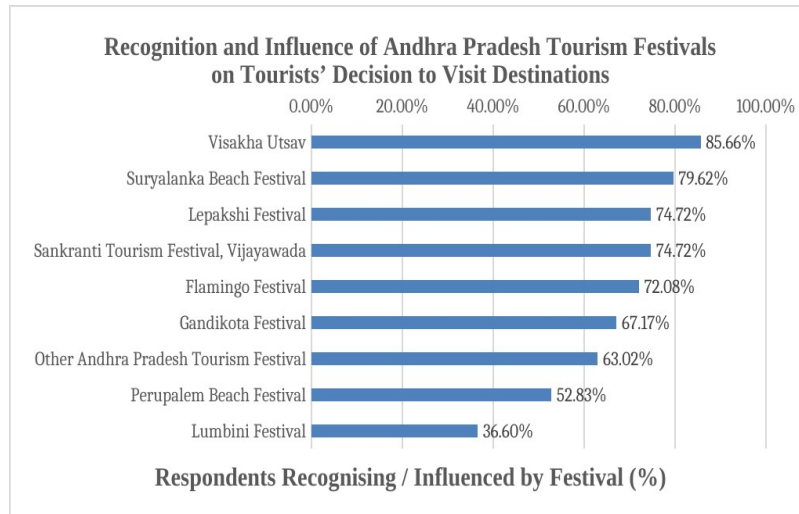


Figure 3. Recognition/influence of Andhra Pradesh Tourism festivals in the primary survey

Interpretation: The figure shows that Visakha Utsav recorded the highest level of recognition and influence among respondents, at 85.66%, indicating its strong visibility as a tourism festival in Andhra Pradesh. This was followed by the Suryalanka Beach Festival (79.62%). The Lepakshi Festival and Sankranti Tourism Festival, Vijayawada each recorded 74.72%, showing considerable tourist awareness and influence. The Flamingo Festival (72.08%) also demonstrated a strong response, reflecting interest in eco-cultural tourism events. Gandikota Festival (67.17%) and other Andhra Pradesh Tourism festivals (63.02%) showed moderate to high levels of recognition. The Perupalem Beach Festival recorded 52.83%, indicating that more than half of the respondents recognised or were influenced by the event. In contrast, the Lumbini Festival recorded the lowest percentage at 36.60%. Overall, the findings suggest that Andhra Pradesh Tourism festivals play an important role in creating destination awareness and influencing tourists' decisions to visit different parts of the state. The comparatively lower recognition of some festivals indicates scope for stronger publicity, digital promotion, and destination branding.

7.8 Rate the attractiveness of the following cultural-heritage elements in Andhra Pradesh

Rank	Cultural-Heritage Element	Weighted Score	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	Temples and religious sites	1,095	4.13	0.96	Attractive
2	Historical monuments and heritage sites	1,026	3.87	1.09	Attractive
3	Traditional arts and crafts	963	3.63	1.20	Attractive
4	Folk dances and music	929	3.51	1.24	Attractive
5	Traditional food and cuisine	905	3.42	1.27	Attractive
6	Buddhist heritage and cultural sites	878	3.31	1.17	Moderately Attractive
7	Local customs and traditions	877	3.31	1.24	Moderately Attractive
8	Tribal culture and festivals	852	3.22	1.14	Moderately Attractive

Table 9. Cultural-heritage attractiveness ratings (1-5 scale; composite mean = 3.55)

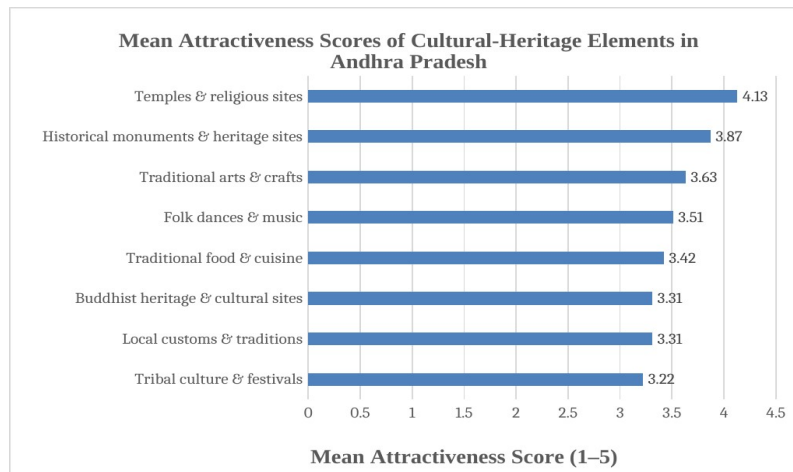


Figure 4. Mean attractiveness of cultural-heritage elements (1-5 scale)

Interpretation: Figure 4 shows that temples and religious sites are the most attractive cultural-heritage element in Andhra Pradesh, recording the highest mean score of 4.13. This is followed by historical monuments and heritage sites with a mean score of 3.87, indicating their strong appeal among visitors. Traditional arts and crafts recorded a mean score of 3.63, while folk dances and music scored 3.51, reflecting the importance of performing and artistic traditions in enhancing the cultural tourism experience. Traditional food and cuisine also received a relatively high mean score of 3.42, showing that local culinary traditions form an important part of destination attractiveness. Buddhist heritage and cultural sites and local customs and traditions both recorded a mean score of 3.31. Tribal culture and festivals received the lowest mean score of 3.22, although it still indicates a moderate level of attractiveness. Overall, the findings suggest that religious heritage, monuments, traditional arts, cultural performances, and cuisine are the strongest cultural assets influencing tourism attractiveness in Andhra Pradesh. The comparatively lower scores for Buddhist heritage, local traditions, and tribal culture indicate potential areas for stronger promotion and visitor interpretation.

7.8 Rating of Tourism Infrastructure and Visitor Facilities during Major Festivals in Andhra Pradesh

Rank	Facility	Weighted Score	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	Accommodation availability	958	3.62	1.20	Good
2	Food and refreshment facilities	923	3.48	1.29	Good
3	Safety and security	921	3.48	1.34	Good
4	Sanitation and cleanliness	904	3.41	1.30	Good
5	Crowd management	898	3.39	1.28	Average
6	Tourist information	897	3.38	1.37	Average
7	Transportation and connectivity	896	3.38	1.30	Average
8	Parking and local mobility	887	3.35	1.31	Average

Table 10. Ratings of Tourism Infrastructure & Visitor Facilities (1-5 scale)

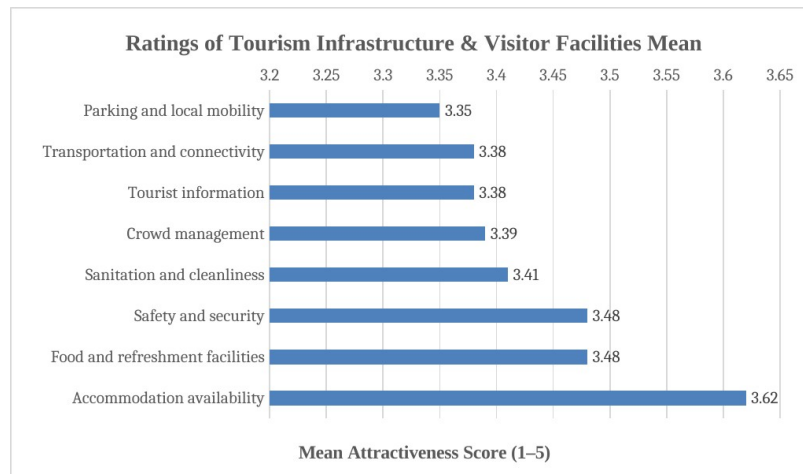


Figure 5. Ratings of Tourism Infrastructure & Visitor Facilities (1-5 scale)

Interpretation: The figure indicates that the overall tourism infrastructure and visitor facilities available during major festivals in Andhra Pradesh are rated at a moderate to good level. Accommodation availability received the highest mean score of 3.62, indicating that respondents generally viewed lodging facilities positively during festival periods. Food and refreshment facilities and safety and security jointly recorded a mean score of 3.48, showing relatively favorable perceptions of these services. Sanitation and cleanliness followed with a mean score of 3.41. Crowd management recorded a mean score of 3.39, while tourist information and transportation and connectivity each received a mean score of 3.38. Parking and local mobility recorded the lowest mean score of 3.35. Overall, the results suggest that accommodation, food services, and safety are comparatively stronger aspects of festival-related tourism infrastructure, whereas parking, local mobility, transportation, tourist information, and crowd management require further improvement to enhance visitor convenience and the overall festival tourism experience.

7.9 Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Statistical Result	Decision on Null Hypothesis	Result of Alternative Hypothesis
H01: Festival and cultural events do not show a systematic influence on tourists' choice of destination and travel timing.	$M = 2.20/4$, $SD = 1.09$; $\chi^2 = 18.97$, $p < .001$; $t = -4.43$, $p < .001$	Reject H01	H11 supported , but the influence is differentiated rather than strongly positive
H02: Festivals and cultural heritage do not contribute above the neutral level to local income and employment opportunities.	$M = 3.80/5$, $SD = 1.07$; $t = 12.20$, $p < .001$	Reject H02	H12 supported
H03: Andhra Pradesh Tourism's promotion of festivals and cultural events is not rated above the scale midpoint.	$M = 2.95/4$, $SD = 0.92$; $t = 7.88$, $p < .001$	Reject H03	H13 supported
H04: Festival and cultural tourism do not contribute above the scale midpoint to the preservation and promotion of traditional culture and heritage.	$M = 2.89/4$, $SD = 0.90$; $t = 7.03$, $p < .001$	Reject H04	H14 supported

Hypothesis	Statistical Result	Decision on Null Hypothesis	Result of Alternative Hypothesis
H05: There is no statistically significant linear time trend in domestic tourist visits to Andhra Pradesh during 2020–2025.	$R^2 = 0.971$; $r = 0.985$; $p < .001$; fitted annual increase ≈ 56.23 million visits	Reject H05	H15 supported

Table 11. Hypothesis Testing Results

Interpretation

H01 and H11: H01 is rejected because the response distribution for festival influence on destination choice and travel timing is significantly different from a uniform distribution ($\chi^2 = 18.97$, $p < .001$). Therefore, **H11 is supported**, indicating that festivals and cultural events have a systematic influence on travel decisions. However, the mean score of **2.20/4** is significantly below the midpoint of 2.50 ($t = -4.43$, $p < .001$). Thus, the influence exists, but festivals are not uniformly or strongly decisive in determining tourists' destination choice and travel timing.

H02 and H12: H02 is rejected because the perceived contribution of festivals and cultural heritage to local income and employment recorded a mean of **3.80/5**, which is significantly above the neutral midpoint ($t = 12.20$, $p < .001$). Accordingly, **H12 is supported**, confirming that respondents perceive festivals and cultural heritage as making a significant positive contribution to local income and employment opportunities.

H03 and H13: H03 is rejected because Andhra Pradesh Tourism's promotion effectiveness recorded a mean score of **2.95/4**, significantly above the scale midpoint ($t = 7.88$, $p < .001$). Therefore, **H13 is supported**, indicating that respondents positively evaluate the role of Andhra Pradesh Tourism in promoting festivals and cultural events as tourism attractions.

H04 and H14: H04 is rejected because the contribution of festival and cultural tourism to heritage preservation and promotion recorded a mean of **2.89/4**, significantly above the midpoint ($t = 7.03$, $p < .001$). Consequently, **H14 is supported**, suggesting that festivals and cultural tourism are perceived to contribute positively to the preservation and promotion of Andhra Pradesh's traditional culture and heritage.

H05 and H15: H05 is rejected based on the secondary-data time-trend analysis. Domestic tourist visits showed a very strong positive linear relationship with time during 2020–2025 ($r = 0.985$, $R^2 = 0.971$, $p < .001$), with an estimated fitted increase of approximately **56.23 million visits per year**. Therefore, **H15 is supported**, confirming a statistically significant positive linear time trend in domestic tourist visits to Andhra Pradesh during the study period. This finding should nevertheless be interpreted as a tourism-growth trend rather than as proof that festivals alone caused the increase.

7.10 Top Eight Districts by Domestic Tourist Visits in Andhra Pradesh, 2024

District	2024 DTV	DTV share	2024 FTV	FTV share
Tirupati	34,415,122	11.86%	9,262	3.53%
NTR	28,275,115	9.74%	8,293	3.16%
Guntur	20,723,902	7.14%	1,040	0.40%
Visakhapatnam	19,963,202	6.88%	41,106	15.66%
Alluri Seetarama Raju	18,186,023	6.27%	719	0.27%
Srikakulam	18,113,584	6.24%	72	0.03%
Chittoor	17,484,916	6.02%	447	0.17%
Kakinada	16,575,347	5.71%	157	0.06%

Table 12. Top Eight Districts by Domestic Tourist Visits in Andhra Pradesh, 2024

Source: Andhra Pradesh Tourism Authority

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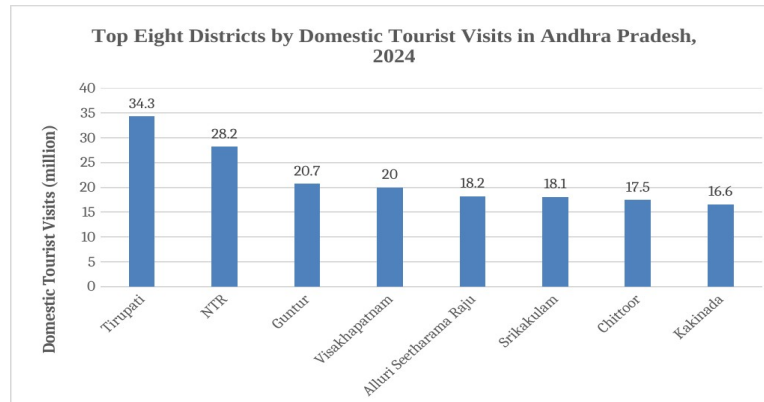


Figure 6. Top eight districts by domestic tourist visits in 2024

Interpretation: The 2024 district-level data indicate a relatively dispersed pattern of domestic tourism across Andhra Pradesh, with a Domestic Tourist Visit (DTV) Herfindahl–Hirschman Index (HHI) of approximately 0.060. Tirupati accounted for the largest share of domestic tourist visits at 11.86%, followed by NTR district at 9.74%. In contrast, foreign tourism was highly concentrated, with an FTV HHI of approximately 0.523. This concentration was largely driven by Sri Sathya Sai district, which accounted for about 70.33% of the reported foreign tourist visits in 2024, followed by Visakhapatnam with 15.66%. Paired district-level comparisons between 2023 and 2024 did not reveal a statistically significant average change across the 26 districts for either domestic tourist visits ($t = 0.94$, $p = 0.355$) or foreign tourist visits ($t = 0.99$, $p = 0.334$). These findings do not contradict the overall statewide growth trend, as changes in tourist flows were uneven across districts, with some districts recording increases while others experienced relatively smaller gains or declines.

7.11 Major Challenges Reported by Respondents

Rank	Challenge	Frequency	Percentage
1	Inadequate transportation	75	28.30%
2	Overcrowding	56	21.13%
3	Safety/crowd-management concerns	56	21.13%
4	Limited tourist information/signage	46	17.36%
5	Insufficient accommodation	45	16.98%
6	Weak publicity/marketing	45	16.98%
7	Limited digital information/online promotion	40	15.09%
8	Poor sanitation/cleanliness	39	14.72%
9	High prices during festivals	34	12.83%
10	Inadequate tourist facilities	29	10.94%

Table 13. Major challenges to festival and cultural tourism (multiple responses; N = 265)

Interpretation: Transportation emerged as the most frequently identified constraint affecting festival and cultural tourism in Andhra Pradesh, reported by 28.30% of respondents. This was followed by overcrowding and safety and crowd-management concerns, each identified by 21.13% of respondents. These findings are consistent with the comparatively lower mean ratings recorded for transportation and connectivity, crowd management, tourist information services, parking, and local mobility. The results indicate that weaknesses in destination-management infrastructure can reduce visitor convenience and the overall quality of the festival tourism experience. Therefore, increasing promotional

efforts alone may not be sufficient to maximize the benefits of festival tourism. Greater tourism gains are likely to be achieved when festival promotion is accompanied by simultaneous improvements in transportation, crowd control, parking, visitor information, safety, sanitation, and other destination-management services.

VIII. MAJOR FINDINGS

Domestic tourist visits increased from 70.83 million in 2020 to 333.83 million in 2025, a 371.3% rise; the time trend is strong and statistically significant ($r = 0.985$, $p < .001$).

Government planning increasingly incorporated mega events, food festivals, trade fairs and Shilparamam cultural activities, but budget figures are programme targets rather than verified event-attendance counts.

Tourism-authority festivals span beach, heritage, wildlife, harvest, food, arts and crafts products, demonstrating event-portfolio diversification.

In the primary survey, Visakha Utsav (85.66%) and Suryalanka Beach Festival (79.62%) recorded the highest AP Tourism festival recognition/influence; Srivari Brahmotsavam led religious events (91.70%).

Cultural-heritage attractiveness is positive overall (composite mean 3.55/5), led by temples/religious sites (4.13) and historical monuments/heritage sites (3.87).

All respondents reported at least some increase in destination expenditure when attending festivals/cultural events; 68.30% reported a moderate or significant increase.

Local income/employment contribution is rated strongly positive ($M = 3.80/5$; $p < .001$), and 73.59% rate Andhra Pradesh Tourism promotion effective or very effective.

Festival infrastructure is satisfactory overall (composite mean 3.44/5) but transport, tourist information, crowd management and parking/local mobility are weaker areas.

IX. SUGGESTIONS

Create a standardized AP Tourism Festival Statistics System. Each state-supported festival should report dates, attendance, vendor turnover, employment generated, safety incidents and visitor satisfaction using the same definitions every year.

Adopt event-specific crowd-capacity and safety plans for pilgrimage and high-volume festivals, including digital queueing, zoned entry/exit, medical points, multilingual signage and trained volunteers.

Strengthen digital festival marketing with a single official calendar integrating UTSAV/AP Tourism information, maps, booking links, festival schedules, accessibility information and multilingual content.

Package festivals with nearby heritage circuits. Examples include Lepakshi with regional craft/heritage experiences, Gandikota with fort-and-rural products, Flamingo Festival with responsible wetland interpretation, and coastal festivals with local cuisine and handicrafts.

Expand community and MSME participation through curated craft markets, local food stalls, homestays, guide training and transparent vendor-allocation systems so that visitor spending remains in destination communities.

Use sustainability standards for waste, sanitation, plastic reduction, water use, carrying capacity and sensitive religious/ecological sites; event growth should not compromise the heritage resource that attracts visitors.

Promote lesser-known Buddhist, tribal and regional-cultural assets to reduce over-concentration, while ensuring interpretation is community-led and culturally respectful.

X. CONCLUSION

Festivals and cultural heritage constitute important components of Andhra Pradesh's tourism economy by creating motivations for travel, increasing tourism expenditure during event periods, strengthening destination branding, and providing platforms for the promotion of local culture, crafts, cuisine, rituals, and performing arts. During the period from 2020 to 2025, domestic tourist visits recovered and expanded substantially, while government tourism programmes continued to employ mega events, food festivals, fairs, and cultural activities as instruments of destination promotion.

The primary survey findings support this broader pattern, as major pilgrimage festivals and Andhra Pradesh Tourism-promoted festivals recorded high levels of recognition, cultural heritage was considered important by a large proportion of respondents, and perceptions regarding local income, employment generation, and promotional effectiveness were generally positive.

However, the contribution of festivals should not be overstated or interpreted as the sole cause of tourism growth. Only 38.87% of respondents reported that festivals influenced their destination choice and travel timing to a great or very great extent, indicating that festivals often complement rather than completely determine travel decisions. In addition, consistent festival-wise attendance data are not available for all events, which limits precise measurement of individual festival impacts. The recovery of tourism after the COVID-19 pandemic, pilgrimage demand, infrastructure development, destination promotion, and wider economic and mobility conditions also contributed to the observed growth in tourist visits.

The findings therefore suggest that tourism policy should focus not merely on increasing the number of festivals, but on developing a well-planned, measurable, and professionally managed festival and cultural-tourism portfolio. Greater attention should be given to heritage conservation, transportation, crowd management, visitor information, safety, digital promotion, community participation, local income generation, and the spatial dispersal of tourists to lesser-known destinations. With standardized event-level statistics, stronger destination management, and better integration of festivals with heritage resources, cultural tourism can make a more measurable, inclusive, and sustainable contribution to tourism development in Andhra Pradesh.

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