

Film Tourism Now Central to India's Destination Branding Strategy

PHDCCI's 8th Global Film Tourism Conclave Sets the Agenda for Converting Cinematic Storytelling into Measurable Tourism Growth

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Film tourism has emerged as a core pillar of India's destination branding and economic growth strategy, senior policymakers and industry leaders affirmed at the 8th Global Film Tourism Conclave organised by the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) in Mumbai.



Delivering a special video message, Shri Suresh Gopi, Minister of State for Tourism, Government of India, said, “A location on screen does not remain just geography; it becomes aspiration, memory and a dream people wish to experience for themselves.” Describing India as “a civilisation of stories”, he highlighted the cinematic depth of destinations ranging from Varanasi and Rajasthan to the Northeast and Kerala, and reaffirmed the Government’s commitment to positioning India as a film-friendly destination through progressive policy reforms and seamless facilitation. Emphasising inclusive growth, he noted that film tourism can act as a powerful driver of livelihoods, soft power and grassroots economic opportunities.



Addressing the conclave as Chief Guest, Suman Billa, Additional Secretary and Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, underlined that film tourism must be strategically designed rather than left to chance. Citing global research indicating that nearly 80 million travellers are influenced annually by cinema and media, he described film tourism as one of the most cost-efficient and high-impact destination marketing tools. “A compelling story unlocks aspiration far more effectively than conventional advertising,” he said, calling for model guidelines, measurable incentive structures, PPP frameworks, data-driven evaluation and continuous revenue tracking to convert cinema into a sustained economic engine.



The conclave, themed ‘Cinema Driving Tourism’, was supported by Telangana Tourism and Meghalaya Tourism, and brought together senior policymakers, leading producers, studio heads, content creators, hospitality leaders and tourism stakeholders to chart a roadmap for converting cinematic storytelling into measurable tourism outcomes.



As Guest of Honour, Jayesh Ranjan, Special Chief Secretary, Tourism, Government of Telangana, highlighted the state’s integrated filmmaking ecosystem encompassing studios, locations and advanced technology. He noted that Hyderabad today offers post-production facilities that rival global standards and is increasingly serving non-Hindi film industries. Referring to the ‘Film in Telangana’ digital portal, he said the platform streamlines approvals and pre-identifies filming requirements, significantly easing the process for filmmakers.

Dr. Ranjeet Mehta, CEO & Secretary General, PHDCCI, described cinema as India’s most underleveraged tourism campaign. Drawing parallels with global film-tourism success stories such as New Zealand and the United Kingdom, he called for a coordinated national framework, alignment of incentives across states and systematic mapping of tourism footfall linked to major productions.

In his keynote address, Ravi Kottarakara, President, South Indian Film Chamber of Commerce, aligned film tourism with the Hon’ble Prime Minister’s Make in India vision, urging the industry to “shoot in India, explore India and show the world what India truly represents.” He emphasised that cinema can revive and amplify India’s culture, cuisine, festivals, crafts and heritage, and advocated single-window clearances and a comprehensive national filming guide.

Providing an international perspective, Uday Singh, Managing Director, Motion Picture Association (India), noted that the global screen industry supports nearly 2.6 million jobs and that India is increasingly recognised as both a production and post-production destination, having already attracted over 120 international productions. He stressed that efficiency, scale and predictable incentives are critical to sustained growth.

Mr. Rajan Sehgal, Co-Chair – Tourism & Hospitality Committee, PHDCCI, stated, “Film tourism is no longer a peripheral conversation; it is central to India’s destination branding strategy. This conclave enables actionable collaboration between government frameworks and creative ambition.”

The inaugural session was moderated by Shalini S Sharma, who observed that in the age of OTT platforms and borderless content consumption, destinations are increasingly being discovered through digital storytelling.

The conclave featured focused thematic sessions on the Telugu film industry as a driver of tourism in Telangana, the role of OTT-led content explosion in mainstreaming new destinations, and promoting the North East through cinema, highlighting how policy incentives, connectivity and authentic narratives are reshaping tourism flows.

The event concluded with a valedictory conversation, ‘Stories that Make People Travel’, moderated by Prashant Shishodia, where filmmakers and actors reflected on how audiences travel to emotionally reconnect with cinematic moments. Distinguished speakers were felicitated by PHDCCI for their contribution to promoting film tourism through impactful storytelling.

The conclave was supported by Hilton, IRCTC, Mann Fleet Partners, ADTOI, FHRAI, IATO and TAAI, reaffirming strong industry-wide backing for positioning India as a premier global filming and film-tourism destination.

Sunil Kumar Tiwari

tourism4pib[at]gmail[dot]com

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