

Sustainable Tourism in Goa (A pictorial view of tourism)

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Tourism

Goa, also known as the “Rome of the East”, is famous for tourism world-wide. Tourism is the mainstay of the Goan economy and is the main contributor to the exchequer. Besides tourism, mining, farming and fishing are the other important occupations of the people. Tourism caught the imagination of the people in the world in the 1980s and Goa, due to its natural beauty coupled with the charming Portuguese influence and culture, became a favorite destination for hordes of tourists from all over the world. The Government of Goa has already declared tourism as an industry with effect from 01-04-2000. The master plan for the tourism development has already been prepared by the state and the Tourism Policy of the state has already been framed, but all this has to be implemented properly if we want tourism to be a success story for the state. (Tourist Statistics 2006-07, Department Of Tourism, Goa)

But the number of tourists descending upon Goa is stretching the limits of what can be handled by the state’s infrastructure. It is a small state, measuring around 140 km from North to South and just 65 Km from East to West. In many cases, the burden of tourism has started creating a lot of problems for the locals. Most tourists visit Goa primarily for beach tourism; and although Goa is famous for many other things (like its old and artistic temples and churches), most of the tourists, both Indian and foreign, come with the dual focus of the beaches and the alcohol (which is available cheaply in Goa). In this paper, I propose to examine various aspects of tourism and examine them in the light of Goan economy and society. Tourism is a big business all over the world, and one that is continuously growing. The modern world is full of stress and people search new ways to relax themselves and become refreshed and rejuvenated.

Definition

The definition of a tourist adopted by the UNO is as follows:

“Any person visiting a country, other than that in which he usually resides, for a period of at least 24 hours”

India has adopted the following definition to recognize a tourist

“A person who travels to a country other than that in which he has his usual residence, the main purpose of whose visit is other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the country visited and is staying for a period of at least one night but not more than one year in that country” (Rai, L 1993)

Number of tourists visiting Goa

Goa, as was mentioned earlier is a small state, with a total population of 13.48 lakhs as per the 2001 census. Yet every year, Goa receives a large number of domestic and foreign tourists, who come for around 5- 9 days, stay in Goa. India received a total of 3915324 tourists in 2005, while during the same time Goa was visited by 336803 tourists (foreign)

Goa receives the largest number of tourist from UK followed by Russia. Besides, tourists from Germany, Finland, France, Switzerland, USA and many other countries also visit the state. The domestic tourist comes from all over India, as Goa is a very popular tourist’s destination. The table shows the number of domestic and foreign tourist who have visited the state from 2000 to 2006.

Many of the tourists arrive in Goa directly by the chartered flights and the table below shows the number of such tourists who have arrived and the number of chartered flights that have come to Goa from various countries in the world. The rest of the tourists arrive at Mumbai or Delhi and then come to Goa to visit the place.

Types of Tourism (present and proposed)

India has registered a phenomenal growth in tourism of varying types. Goa has an area of 3702 Sq. Km. of lush green mountains, blue waters and white sands, winding rivers and picturesque villages with local flora and fauna. It is thus capable of offering a wide variety of entertainment for the discerning tourist and the state has the capacity to diversify into newer fields for the future. People all over the world are aware that Goa has very beautiful beaches and in recent years, Goa had been actively projected by the Goa Government as a destination of “Sun, Sand and Smiles” which was later on changed to “Goa - 365 Days a holiday”. But in the process, Goa’s great cultural heritage and other types of potential tourism have been neglected thanks to this overemphasis on Beach Tourism.

Number of tourist arrivals in Goa

| Year | Domestic | Foreign | Total |
|------|----------|---------|---------|
| 2000 | 976804 | 291709 | 1268513 |
| 2001 | 1120242 | 260071 | 1380313 |
| 2002 | 1325296 | 271645 | 1596941 |
| 2003 | 1725140 | 314357 | 2039497 |
| 2004 | 2085729 | 363230 | 2448959 |
| 2005 | 1965343 | 336803 | 2302146 |
| 2006 | 2098654 | 380414 | 2479068 |

- Tourist statistics 2006-07

Arrivals by foreign charter flights

| Year | Number of flights | Passengers |
|---------|-------------------|------------|
| 2000-01 | 419 | 116992 |
| 2001-02 | 279 | 76410 |
| 2002-03 | 384 | 94350 |
| 2003-04 | 523 | 126255 |
| 2004-05 | 690 | 158993 |
| 2005-06 | 719 | 180310 |
| 2006-07 | 720 | 169836 |

- Tourist statistics 2006-07

Some of the types of tourism are as follows:

1. **Beach Tourism:** As Goa has a 105 km coast line, the beaches of Goa are a very important tourist attraction. From Keri in the north to Palolem in the south, Goa has many world famous beaches like Arambol, Colva (longest beach in Goa), Anjuna (known for its flea market), Calangute (most popular and crowded), Palolem and many other small lesser known beaches where the tourists can relax, soak up the sun and feast on the local cuisine (photos of various beaches will be shown during the presentation)
2. **Adventure Tourism:** It has recently become very popular in India. It involves the exploration of remote areas and exotic locales and engaging in various activities like trekking, white water rafting, camel safaris, paragliding, rock climbing etc. Goa has a very good potential for activities like trekking, paragliding, dolphin sighting boating, and mountain climbing. (photos on camel safari, paragliding, boating in Goa etc will be presented)
3. **Wildlife Tourism:** India has a rich forest cover, where we find some very beautiful and exotic species of wildlife. Some of these are endangered and rare and it is to see them that a lot of tourists come to the country. Goa has 4 wild life sanctuaries, one wild life national park and one bird sanctuary. Almost 60 % of the Goan area is protected area. Around 1.25 lakhs tourist visit these sanctuaries every year. Goa has a variety of flora and fauna which could be used to attract tourists to these places. Goa also has two beautiful lakes, at Mayem and Carambolim, where migratory birds are sighted in large numbers (photos of crocodiles and of cranes and other birds will be shown during the presentation. Photographs of the wild life sanctuaries in Goa will also be shown)
4. **Medical Tourism:** Medical tourism is a recent phenomenon in Goa. Many world class medical hospitals like Apollo and Vivus have been started in Goa, which provide world class facilities at a fraction of the corresponding cost abroad. Foreigners from many developed countries prefer to come to Goa for a variety of treatment ranging from dental surgery, hearing problems, knee replacements to even heart surgery. (Photos will be shown during the presentation). This is a market where Goa has potential for further development and the government should take steps to see that this market can be sustained and increased medical tourism can be promoted in the future
5. **Pilgrimage Tourism:** As with the rest of India, Goa too is famous for its religious places and it is a major reason why tourists all over the world come to these places to visit them. The World Heritage Site at Old Goa is a major tourist attraction with a large number of churches such as St Cajetan, Our Lady of the Mount, St Francis of Assisi Church and Convent, Basilica of Bom Jesus, Se Cathedral, Church of Our Lady of Rosary, the Archaeological Museum, the Christian Art Museum, the ruins of the Church and Monastery of St Augustine, The Chapel of St Catherine, the Viceroy's Arch, Chapel of St Anthony (opposite the ruins of the Church of St Augustine) Convent of Santa Monica. Besides this there are many other beautiful

churches and temples all over Goa. A few kilometers away from Old Goa, we have the famous Mangueshi and Mardol temples as well as the Saptakoteshwar temples at Narve (photos of churches and other temples will be shown during the presentation).

6. Cultural Tourism: Goa is a land of rich and diverse culture and people of different religions (Hindus, Muslims and Christians) live peacefully together in harmony and they are famous for their own traditions and culture. Goa is famous for the Carnival and the IFFI. Besides, Bonderam (Divar) , Sangodd (Boat festival) and Taranga are also famous. Goa is known for traditional cultural dances and songs (Mandos, Fuggdies, Goff, Godemodni and many others) (photographs of some cultural events will be displayed)

7. Architectural Tourism: India has a rich amalgamation of various architectural styles where the influence of many dynasties and many cultures can be seen. Some of the important places include Dilwara temples at Rajasthan, Taj Mahal at Agra, Victoria terminus and Fort Area in Mumbai, Red Fort at Delhi, etc. Goa too has an architecturally rich heritage which could be projected by the government as tourist places. Goa has many forts like Chapora, Teracol and Alorna which can be used to attract the tourists (photos)

8. Yoga Tourism: Goa is a land of peace and tranquility. “Susegad” - roughly meaning “laid-back” - that is how the Goans are traditionally known. The hinterlands of Goa, far from the noise of the city, are perfect for yoga and meditations. The peaceful villages, where the occasional lowing of a cow is the only likely disturbance, are a perfect backdrop for such a type of tourism. Goa has not concentrated on this at present, but there is a huge potential for this type of activity (photos)

9. Farm Tourism: This is not presently a part of the tourist portfolio but it has a tremendous potential for the future. Goa, with its lush green fields, could easily exploit this resource in the future. Some of the ways in which this could be achieved could be through the techniques of renting trees, animals, farms to tourists where they can come and spend some time on the farm and also learn how the farm operates and how to take care of the animals and the trees (photos)

10. Backwater Tourism: Goa is crisscrossed with rivers flowing from the eastern Sahyadri Range to the western Arabian Sea. From north to south, the following rivers, Tiracol, Chapora, Mandovi, Zuari, Sal and Talpona, flow windingly through villages and give support to the local economy, either for agriculture or for fishing. Sight seeing can be done from the water instead of the road. The inland cruises could have landing points near the spice gardens, churches and temples so that the tourist can see the important places too along with the scenic river trip. The Alorna fort too can be an attractive attraction for backwater tourism (photos of back water, mangroves)

Sustainable tourism

Definition:

Sustainability is a characteristic of a process or state that can be maintained at a certain level indefinitely. Thus it is a process that takes care of “tomorrow” as well as “today”, conserving resources where necessary to ensure continuity.

Sustainable tourism thus attempts to make minimal impact on the environment and local culture, while helping to generate income and employment for locals, as well as to promote the conservation of local ecosystems. It is responsible tourism which is both ecologically and culturally sensitive.

As tourism grows at a high rate, it tends to place a great stress on the diverse habitats and these will be destroyed. Indiscriminate tourism could very easily destroy, or at least irretrievably damage, the flora and the fauna of the state. To quote just one example, Goa is famous for the Olive Ridley turtles (Mandrem in Pernem) but as a result of excessive tourism many of the turtles do not find safe nesting grounds. The very promotion of “eco holiday ” in the area by the hoteliers are defeating the purpose as littering the beach and overcrowding do not allow the turtles to hatch safely.

Sustainable tourism is especially important for a small state like Goa since the influx of both Indian and foreign tourists is increasing very year. Goa being a tiny state, the carrying capacity of the state in terms of the size, facilities available and the ecological fragility should be thoroughly studied and taken into consideration while allowing tourism; only then would such tourism be beneficial, in the long run, for the state and the people. The stake holders in sustainable tourism i.e. Community-based management, non-governmental organizations, tourists and locals all should be trained to see that the fragile Goan ecosystem does not suffer as a result of excessive tourism.

Tourists, who promote sustainable tourism are aware of these dangers and seek to protect tourist destinations, and to protect tourism as an industry.

The local community has an important role to play in sustainable tourism and will have to keep the following points in mind if they wish that, tourism continues to be the mainstay for the economy of the state

1. Be Courteous: The local people should be courteous to the tourists and help them to have a wonderful holiday so that they may go back to their places and send more tourists to the state. This word of mouth publicity will do wonders for the state tourism.

- Do not harass the tourists: Many of the tourists from foreign countries are so very different from the locals that the locals harass them by staring at them and following them unnecessarily
- Do not over charge the tourist: Goa is a place where the tourists are fleeced (transport, food, stay) and hence very often the tourism industry is faces a bad impact of this overcharging
- Do not force tourists to buy your products: tourists in Goa, and other tourist places face a lot of harassment from the local venders ,especially small children who continuously follow the tourists and insist that they buy the products

Environmental impact of tourism

Positive impact

1. Financial contributions.(one of the largest contributor to the exchequer)
2. Improving environmental management and planning.
3. Increasing the environmental awareness.
4. Alternate employment.

Negative impact

Negative impact of tourism occurs when the level of visitors' use is greater than the environmental ability to cope with the situation within the acceptable limits of change.

Uncontrolled tourism poses potential threats to the natural areas including

1. Depletion of resources (especially water)
2. Pressure on land and resources (to set up hotels and other facilities)
3. Land degradation (due to nature trails and other facilities to the tourists)
4. Pollution (air, water, noise)

Some of the suggestions that I would like to give to improve the tourism industry and make it more sustainable include:

1. Diversifying the areas of tourism: the tourism industry in Goa has mainly concentrated on beach tourism and neglected other forms of tourism to a large extent. My suggestion is that Goa should diversify into other areas , like farm and yoga tourism which have the potential for future growth and development
2. Training the guides and the local people : The local people should be trained in hospitality services and the guides should be trained to provide the necessary and the correct information to the tourist
3. Maintain the control on the prices of goods and the quality of services: the prices of the goods and services in Goa are very high, and hence many tourists are discouraged from shopping and buying local items. The local people too, find the cost of living very high and very often the local people cannot afford to purchase their daily requirements. The government should keep a control on the prices of the products so that the local people and the tourist do not suffer
4. Improving the infrastructure especially the transport: for tourism, transport is very important and in Goa we have variety of transport facilities .Motorcycle pilots are a unique feature of Goa where a person can travel any distance on a hired bike. Besides we also have many tourist taxis and other buses, but the rates charged for a small distance are exorbitant. Most of the rickshaws and taxies do not charge by meter. The public transport facility should be strengthened so that the tourists can visit the place of their choice at a very cheap rate.
5. Improving the safety especially of women. Today many tourist women are facing many problems from the local people, especially as they do not maintain the hours and come back to the hotel or guest houses late at night. Many of the foreign women have faced molestation and other problems in Goa
6. Maintaining a control on the beaches. The beaches in Goa are very dangerous for swimming due to the changes in tides. Even after the posting of lifeguards and many warning signs, foreign and other tourists go swimming, especially when they are drunk and the number of the dead by drowning has increased tremendously. The government and the local people should undertake steps to educate the tourists

about the dangers of swimming in the seas. Trained lifeguards should be placed at all the major beaches, with life boats and life belts.

In conclusion, I would like to put forth the submission that tourism has an important place in the economy of Goa, but this has to be carried out in a very systematic manner. Only when the Government and the local people come together, implement the policy, which has been framed, in a vigorous manner, tourism will be a boon else it will be a burden to the tiny beautiful state of Goa.

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Some of the websites referred to are :

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