

Village Tourism As A Key To Meet The Challenge Of Sustaining Tourism In Goa

* *Smitha Bhandare Kamat*

INTRODUCTION

On the historic day of 19th December 1961, Portuguese colonialism, extending to 451 long years, finally came to an end in Goa. Post Liberation, in the mid sixties, the hippies discovered the kingdom of good times in Goa, and for this particular horde of rebels, nothing seemed more enthralling. They progressively nestled at the far end of the 105 kms. white shoreline, fringed with swaying palms, the green fields and orchards. Commercialization of the virgin white beaches, with its irresistible sun and surf was yet to take place. But, for some strange reason, the '*Hippy Image*' stuck for good, it probably had to do with, if not more, an equally fun loving and peace loving local populace. The historical past, in addition to the strategic alliance with rich heritage, not to forget its irresistible natural beauty, served as powerful paraphernalia to attract the guests to its doorsteps. In this backdrop, it is but natural that over the decades, the tourist traffic to this state has registered a phenomenal growth, and is incessant. Undeniably, international tourists as well as domestic tourists flooded the tiny state and at times, this floating population exceeded the local residents as was the case in December 2003. As per the Tourism department, the Year 2003 saw a record total of 532 charter flights bringing in 140,000 foreign tourists and the total guests that particular year touched a colossal figure of 2.045 million. According to Mr Ralhp de Souza, president of TTAG (Travel and Tourism Association of Goa), "*Over 90 per cent of the charter flights coming into India touch base at Goa while Goan stakeholders in the tourism industry have invested over ₹ 20,000 crore, employing over 5 lakh people, and contributing 1/3rd to Goa's GDP*", **Kamat Prakash (2010)**. Thus, it comes as no surprise that, with the optimistic leaning exhibited by tourism, it was but natural that the Government of Goa declared it as an '*Industry*' in the year 2000.

REVIEW

Goa is ranked as the best state by Eleventh Finance Commission w.r.t. infrastructure facilities, while CRISIL has declared Goa as the second fastest growing state in the country. Goa, a tiny state, has a total area of 3702 sq. kms while the State's population, according to the 2001 Census is 1.34 million. Goa joined the national mainstream 14 years after India's independence on the 30th of May, 1987.

Goa is synonymous with the rich bounties of nature. It is indeed blessed in abundance by nature, whether it's the sand and surf or the green finery or the meandering rivers or the very contagious spirit of fun and peace, both the domestic and international guests find this destination irresistible. Goa is basically professing beach centric tourism right from the inception of this '*Experience industry*', in the mid sixties, with the arrival of its first guests in the Avatar of Hippy. Ever since, the tourist traffic to this state has registered a phenomenal growth (refer to exhibit 1). Thus, from a mere handful in the early sixties to 775,212 in 1985 to 25,03,703 million in 2009, the flow has remained incessant. In 1985, the total number of domestic and international tourists visiting and holidaying in the state stood at 682,545 and 92,667 respectively, which jumped to 21,27,063 and 376,640, which is indeed remarkable, especially the growing demand among the domestic tourists. While the international guests show a steady growth, the composition of these are as follows- a high flow from the UK (32 per cent), followed by Germany, Finland, Switzerland, Sweden, Italy, Austria and France. Around 10,000 Americans also visit the coastal state annually (**Prabhudesai Sandesh (2001)**). Goa that was once a favorite destination among the British, is slowly being replaced by Russians in the recent past. For financial year 2009-2010, British arrivals dropped by 18%, while arrivals from far east Europe-specially Russia, Estonia, Belarus, etc increased (**Fernandes Joaquim (2010)**). According to **D'souza Ralph (2010)**, the prediction for 2010-2011 winter season (October-April), is -there would be increase of charter flights from 718 to 740; 232 flights

* *Assistant Professor*, Department of Commerce, S.S. Dempo College of Commerce & Economics, Panjim, Goa - 403201.
E-mail : smitak_goa@sancharnet.in

are expected from U.K against the 222 that came in last season, while 266 fights from Russia against 255 last year, Switzerland and Germany will relatively see steady 45 flights, While Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Iceland will contribute 78 against 89, the fall is attributed to visa restrictions, garbage woes and dropping profit margins among others.

Exhibit 1: Tourist Arrivals (Year Wise)

Year	Domestic	Foreign	Total	% Change
1985	682545	92667	775212	--
1986	736548	97533	834081	7.6
1987	766846	94602	861448	3.3
1988	761859	93076	854935	-0.7
1989	771013	91430	862443	0.9
1990	776993	104330	881323	2.2
1991	756786	78281	835067	-5.6
1992	774568	121442	896010	7.3
1993	798576	170658	969234	8.2
1994	849404	210191	1059595	9.3
1995	878487	229218	1107705	4.5
1996	888914	237216	1126130	1.7
1997	928925	261673	1190598	5.7
1998	953212	275047	1228259	3.2
1999	960114	284298	1244412	1.3
2000	976804	291709	1268513	1.9
2001	1120242	260071	1380313	8.8
2002	1325296	271645	1596941	15.7
2003	1725140	314357	2039497	27.71
2004	2085729	363230	2448959	20.1
2005	1965343	336803	2302146	-6.0
2006	2098654	380414	2479068	7.7
2007	2208986	388457	2597443	4.6
2008	2020416	351123	2371539	-9.5
2009	2127063	376640	2503703	5.5
2010	814995 (P)	198200 (P)	1013195 (P)	

Source: <http://www.goatourism.gov.in/About%20DOT/Statistics.htm#>

The flip side is '*the hippy culture*' in Goa, with its demonstration effect has only encouraged sex, drugs, nudism. The repercussion is we have tourists flocking this state more for the above stated reasons rather than pure leisure and relaxation. While the unregulated tourism growth saw unabated urbanization, accompanied with an alteration in the social- cultural dynamics. The state has also witnessed an alarming rise in protests, murders, unnatural deaths crimes etc. Thus, to counter this degeneration, apart from the unregulated and reckless growth of the industry, as well as to inject an element of sustainability, new avenues needs to be deliberated. As **Singh and Mishra (2004)** suggested, tourist activities and facilities need to be diversified in order to achieve multiple benefits, including scientific field excursions, recreation in natural and cultural areas, community festivals and sports tourism. Each state of India has innumerable treasures to offer. Goa is not an exception. In fact, a study conducted by Delhi-based Consulting Engineering Services (India) Ltd., who is preparing the Tourism Master Plan for the state, discloses that around 60% of its guests seek beach tourism, though above 35 to 45 per cent domestic tourists as well as 20 per cent foreign tourists also attempt to venture in other areas namely- hills, forests and wild life and heritage places in Goa IST (2000). As per

Goa Government Portal, Goa has 360 Villages of which 347 are inhabited; Apart from the coastal beach centric villages and the mining belt villages, Goa still upholds villages (albeit limited in numbers) that can be explored for the introduction of Village/Rural Tourism per se (**Kamat Smitha (2011)**).

It may be known that 'Tourism Village', is a village area which possesses certain special characteristics as a tourism object. Here, ethnicity and ethnic lifestyle, which includes traditions, culture, besides the local cuisine/food, the socio-agriculture system and everything local in its pristine form is marketed to the guest. Moreover, pure nature and environment are additional trait for a tourism village. Thus, a harried metropolitan guest unwinds in a rustic countryside in perfect harmony with his host sans a commercial and superficial environment offered by a hotel. As per **Bramwell and Lane (1994)**, "*Rural tourism is a multi-faceted activity: it is not just farm-based tourism. It includes farm-based holidays, but also comprises of special interest nature holidays and ecotourism, walking, climbing and riding holidays, adventure, sport and health tourism, hunting and angling, educational travel, arts and heritage tourism, and, in some areas, ethnic tourism.*" Sustainable tourism, on the other hand, 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, **Abreu Nirmala (2008)**. Undeniably, Goa, is in dire need for the same. An attempt is being made to initiate and support medical, hinterland, adventure tourism in the state etc. **Wilson David (1997)**, opines that it would seem sensible to maintain the current broad market base of the industry, and encourage greater diversification in the type of tourists who visit Goa with more emphasis being placed on cultural and heritage tourism. **Subhash (2008b)** warns that unless the rich, cultural and religious heritage and varied natural attractions are properly identified and tapped as a rural tourism product/service, rural / village development in India will remain as a distant dream for another 20-50 years time. Can Goa ignore the warning? It needs to be probed.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

Given the fact, Goa has witnessed a reckless growth of tourism in the state, and the exclusive and excessive dependence on beach centric tourism warrants a need to inject sustainability by means of diversification. Is Village/Rural tourism the answer is being examined in the present paper.

METHODOLOGY

✿ **Micro Study:** Besides personal observations by the virtue of being a local resident, a survey, was conducted of 100 tourists, both domestic and international tourists visiting the two villages in north Goa, namely Assagao and Candolim. A structured questionnaire was administered to both sets of tourists in the time span of October 2010 to December 2010. Secondary data was collected through various research articles and manuscripts.

FINDINGS

Exhibit 2 throws light on the reaction of the local populace mainly residing in the coastal belt of the state, where tourism is at its climax. In their opinion, there is a mixed reaction towards tourism, albeit there is admittance of the industry's capability in generating income and employment. In the same breath, there is admittance of the socio-cultural fabric of the society being corroded, this probably explains an extremely low affinity towards hippy tourism which stands at 1.92 %, while a high of 60.25% is towards the middle class lot. Finally, 44.87 % disapprove the Government's approach towards tourism.

From Exhibit 3, it may be seen that the two villages selected are very popular and frequented by both domestic as well as international tourists. Candolim with its white shoreline, incidentally, is very close to yet another time-honored beach village of Calangute and is undeniably, more popular with the domestic tourists (48%) as against 45% of their foreign counterparts. In words of **Frederick Noronha (2004)**, Goa's tourism belt is getting overcrowded. Candolim, a former fishing village, now turned tourist destination, has a density of 1,021 persons per kilometer, as compared to Bardez Taluka's 624 persons per kilometer. But, it appears there is no distinct difference in the frequency of travel by the guests visiting these two villages.

Another important observation w.r.t. Assagao as compared to Candolim is that the former is, a non beach centric village and is opening up to tourists, and tourism. While Candolim is a beach centric village and is very popular

Exhibit 2: General Survey Of The Public (Local Community Opinion)

Profile of Sample	Percentage
Age	
1 to 30	40.38
31 to 50	43.58
50 and above	11.53
Residence	
Coastal	82.05
Interior	0.64
Effects of Tourism	
Good	13.46
Bad	17.31
No effect	18.58
Good Effect	
Income	42.94
Employment	43.58
Foreign Exchange	12.17
Bad Effect	
Degradation of physical Environment	23.07
Degradation of socio-cultural ethical Environment	60.89
Economic pressures	37.82
Desirable Type of Tourism	
Five Star	7.05
Middle Class	60.25
Low budget	17.31
Hippy	1.92
Youth	26.92
Pilgrim	35.89
Approval of Govt. Approach	
Approved	18.58
Disapproved	44.87
Indifferent	27.56

Source: Afonso Ave, Rodrigues Tensing (1994) Tourism in Goa, Socio-economic Impact-Manuscript Report 2, Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi, 1994,pg.162.

Exhibit 3: Type of Tourists and Frequency of Travel

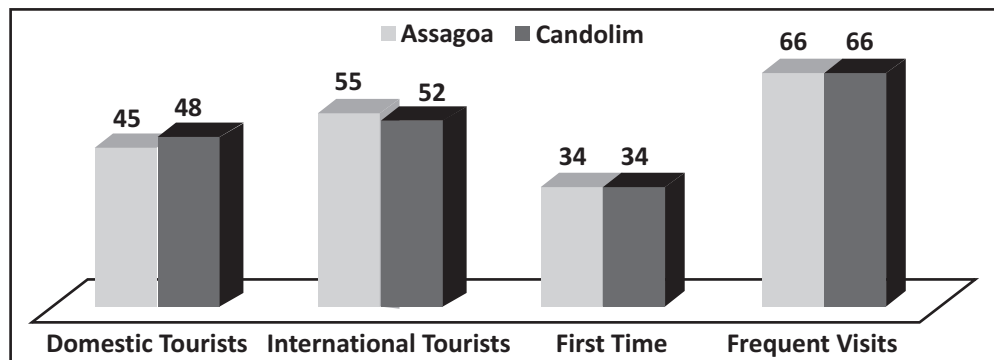
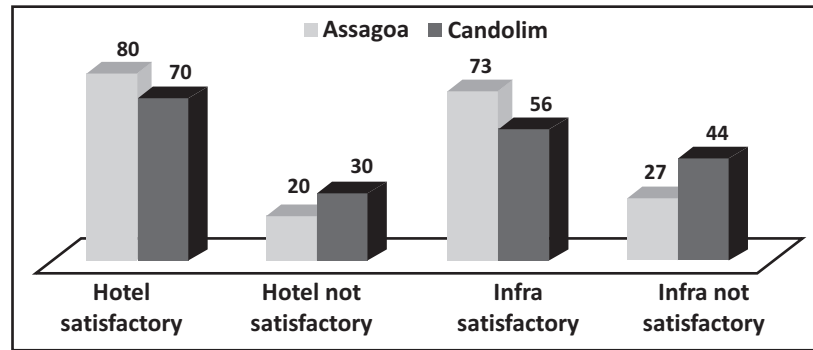


Exhibit 4: Support System and Satisfaction



among its guests irrespective of the country of origin. Nonetheless, what is equally important is whether there is a satisfactory support system available and whether the needs of the guests are met (In this regard, refer to exhibit 4). The perception of the respondents as far as hotel accommodation and existing infrastructure is concerned seemingly appears to be satisfactory, with scope for improvement. This is a positive sign.

Another primary requisite to introduce Village Tourism, is the co-operation of locals. This truth echoes in **Costa and Ferrone (1995)** works, it states "*tourism planning to succeed, the involvement and participation of the residents of the destination areas is needed.*" As compared to Candolim, Assagoa adopts a relatively more compassionate approach towards the guests. Candolim, on the other hand, has witnessed people from round the globe swarming its shores, concretization, traffic jams, garbage problem, water, sound pollution are just a few problems among other innumerable woes faced by the locals. Resultantly, there is rising resentment among the locals. In fact Candolim's org-ware and hardware has undergone a sea change and the very essence of a serene, inviting village is lost. Thus, there are higher prospects to introduce village tourism in Assagoa as against Candolim (Refer To Exhibit 5).

Exhibit 5: Interaction With The Locals

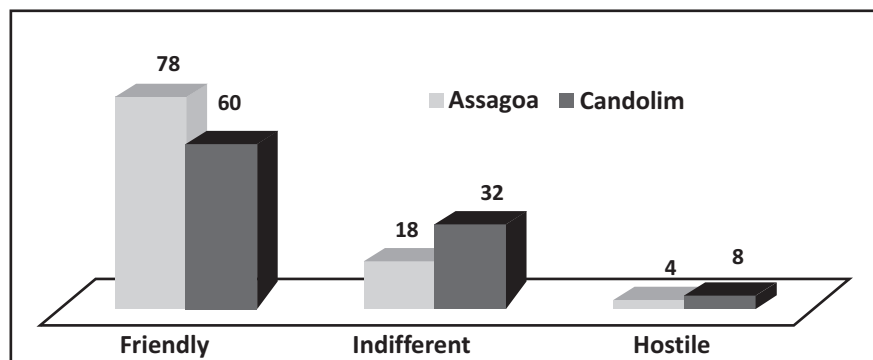
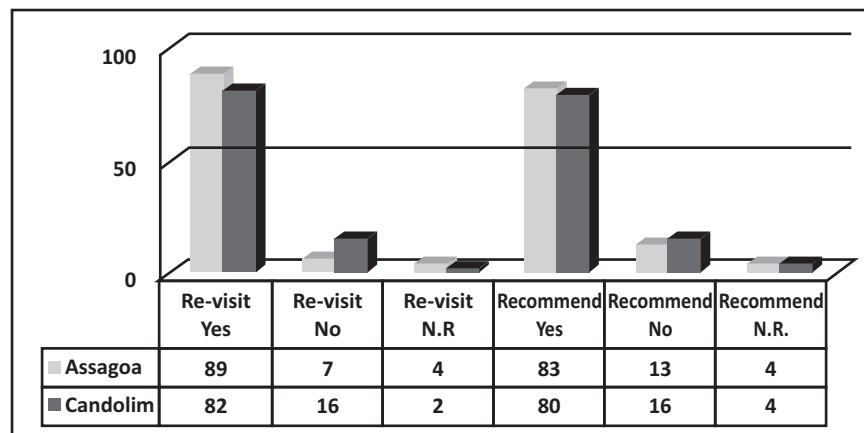


Exhibit 6: Re-Visit And Recommend The Destination



And finally, the big question is how many would return, 89% of the respondents, promises to pay a revisit to Assagao, as against 82% in case of Candolim which indicates Assagao is emerging as the next happening spot and is out to garner more tourists, But, Candolim has the challenge of convincing, retaining and reaping the vacationers at its doorsteps (Refer To Exhibit 6). Irrefutably, word of mouth is very significant in marketing a product or service, tourists visiting Assagao are very convinced to take this task seriously. In the words of **Behan Rosemary(2000)**, *'The village consisted of a few narrow roads with a thin smattering of small houses and fields in between. There was no over-development here, only gloriously empty paddy-fields with the occasional billboard.'* Well, if proper measures are undertaken to retain this irresistible picture, there will not be any dearth of takers.

CONCLUSION

Though Goa has 360 villages, the coastal belt and mining belt villages, have lost its core essence of village hood, nonetheless, the balance villages can be explored in terms of application of the concept of Village/ Rural tourism. Village tourism is a relatively novel concept that can be worked on serious lines; here, tourists can truly experience a genuine glimpse of village life, as the guests have a one to one interaction with the host by not just lodging, but dining, and partaking in the feasts and celebrations of the locals. They also identify with the villagers and their problems so that they leave the place with a true-life experience, hardly upsetting the locale. It can indeed prove an enriching experience for the visitor as well as the host- for the former in an ingenious manner, while the latter stands to gain economically. It also ensures capping the environment and other related problems associated with conventional tourism.

The conclusion of the paper re-instates earlier writers namely, **Piplani (2001)**, who suggests internal marketing, product improvement, to check the decline, while **Frederick Noronha (2002)**, also professes, it would help if Goa could work to diversify away from its brand-image. **Olah Pakurar, (2008)** highlights how Rural tourism as supplemental income can contribute to the increase of wellbeing of the rural inhabitants, the reduced out-migration and to the development of the rural areas.

In this back drop, the two villages taken up for study throws light on the fact that in Candolim, a beach centric tourism is very popular among the domestic tourists, yet there is a growing sense of indifference exhibited by the host towards its guests. This is primarily attributed to the haphazard and reckless growth of tourism, which in turn has thrown up a host of problems such as pollution, crime, concretization etc ,with no solution at hand. Invariably, for the plan to be successful, co-operation of all the stakeholders is vital, and the role of the host community cannot be undermined. Unfortunately, another stumbling block relating to Candolim in the long run is this village that has been stripped of its very essence of village-hood and now faces the challenge of convincing, retaining and sustaining the flow of the vacationers at its doorsteps. Assagao, on the other hand, is a non - tourist centric village, which is gradually stepping into tourism and is more popular with the international tourists, and this village has retained its pristine beauty, culture and heritage and can qualify as a model village to inject village tourism.

In the given context, village tourism promises to diversify from the existing beach centric form of tourism. It also claims to be *'responsible tourism'*, which is both ecologically and culturally sensitive, while simultaneously attending to the needs of the guest and host community. And finally, this strategy promises to inject a fresh lease of life to the *'experience industry'* of the state, and hopefully, cap the mounting woes associated with excessive over dependence on beach centric tourism professed by the state.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND POINTERS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The major drawback of this study is that the views of the host community are absent. Nonetheless, further research could also be undertaken to identify virgin villages of Goa. Goa's coastal villages as well as the mining belt villages have been transformed beyond recognition and may not be suitable to introduce *'Village Tourism'* per se. The biggest challenge is identification of such unadulterated villages. Though Pernem and Cancona Talukha have been identified as having the potential, none the less, proper documentation, mapping will be an enormous task. Another area of interest is the role of the host community and identification of reasons for rising resentment toward the guests. Finally, a holistic picture of the villages needs to be drawn up, encompassing the socio- cultural as well as historical details of each village to be then packaged and marketed both nationally and internationally.

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