

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN KONKAN: A NEED OF TIME

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INTRODUCTION:

Tourism is one of the largest global industries with much of the growing market focused around pristine natural as well as cultural environments. It includes coastal and marine areas, forts, forests, wildlife sanctuaries, temples, etc. Tourism plays an important and vital role in the economic development of the developing country, like India (Tourism, Planning Commission of India). It creates opportunities for employment in the service industries associated with it and include transportation (Airlines, Cruise ships and Taxicabs), hospitality (Accommodations including hotels and resorts) and entertainment venues (Amusement parks, casinos, shopping malls, music venues and theatres) ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cruise ship](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cruise_ship)). Tourism can benefit local communities and Government through revenue generation and employment. However, tourism can also threaten the resources by destroying habitat, disturbing wildlife, affecting water quality, and threaten communities by over-development, crowding, and disruption of local culture. In addition, conventional tourism often does not benefit the local community when tourist revenue “leaks” to outside operators (World Tourism Organization). As a result, tourism can destroy the very resources on which it depends. In contrast, sustainable tourism is consciously planned to benefit local residents, respect local culture, conserve natural resources, direct more of the profits to the local community and Government, and educate both tourists and local residents about the importance of conservation.

WHAT IS TOURISM?

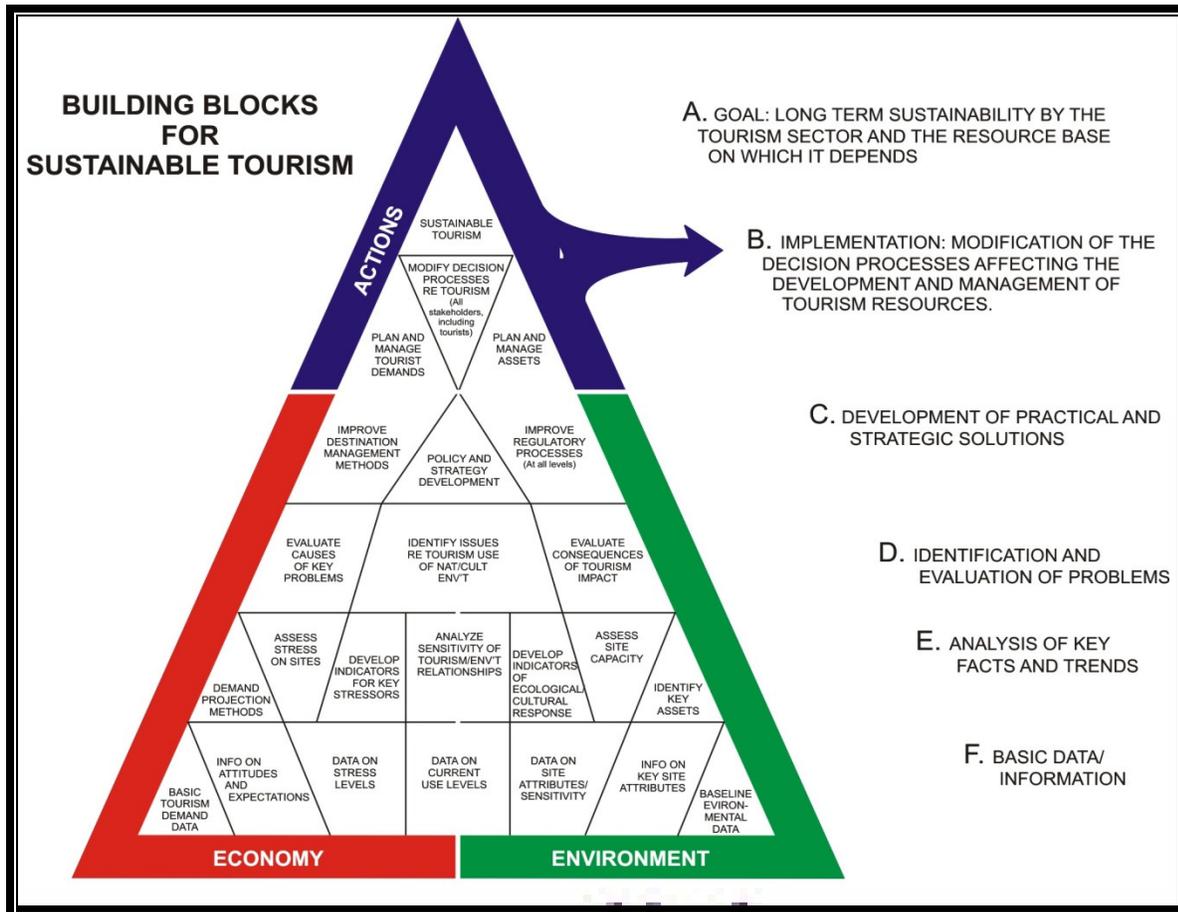
Tourism, in general, is travel for recreational, leisure or business purposes. The council of League of Nations that recommended the definitions of International tourists took the first step towards the development of international definitions on tourism in 1937. The World Tourism Organization defines tourists as people "travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes" (World Tourism Organization).

WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE TOURISM?

Sustainable Development is that "one meets the needs of present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs". Sustainable tourism is an approach that has found much favour recently, both in academic and business world. The concept of sustainable tourism is such approach that balances tourism with its stakeholder relationship, managing the effects of globalization to the advantage of its strengths and opportunities. Countries similar in culture and nature to India (Turkey, Hong-Kong, China, Thailand and Malaysia) have taken the path of sustainable tourism.

The United Nations conference on Environment and development had elaborated and expressed the sustainable development approach in travel and Tourism Agenda-21 in 1995. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) has adopted the sustainable approach to tourism and applied sustainable development studies. **The WTO has defined sustainable tourism as one that meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future.**

Sustainability considers tourism in its environmental, socio-cultural, economic, and experimental dimensions. The guiding principle for sustainable tourism development is to minimize the negative impacts of tourism in order to maximize visitor enjoyment and local benefit. Sustainable Tourism delves into the dimensions created by the various stakeholders.



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THE STUDY REGION:

For the present research paper, the the Konkan region of the Maharashtra is selected as a study region. It is located in the western part of Maharashtra and has 700 km coastline. The Konkan region is well-known due to its geography, culture, history, etc.



OBJECTIVES:

The present study has concentrated on to the sustainable tourism development of the Konkan region. Hence, the objectives of the present study are as given below.

- To take review of tourism development in the Konkan region of Maharashtra.
- To do SWOT analysis of the tourism of the Konkan region.
- To suggest recommendations for Sustainable Tourism Development in Konkan.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The present research work has based on both primary and secondary data. However, primary data is the main source to meet the objectives of the study. Therefore, the correlated data has collected by conducting intensive fieldwork and questionnaire has been used for the same. During the field investigation, observation method as well as informal personal communications with some persons has made for the purpose of verification of data. Secondary data has collected from the various government offices, SOI topographical

maps, books, journals, newspapers and several websites etc., which have explained under references.

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN KONKAN:

Maharashtra, one of the India's premier commercial states, has recognized tourism to be major thrust area of economic growth of the state. For the systematic development of tourism on commercial lines, Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) has been established under the Companies Act, 1956, (fully owned by Govt. of Maharashtra) in the State. MTDC has, since its inception, been involved in the development and maintenance of the various tourist locations of Maharashtra.

The Konkan, also called the Konkan Coast is the name given to a stretch of rugged and beautiful section of the western coastline of India from Raigad to Goa. It also includes Mumbai Region and Thane District. Although, the Konkan region considered as backward region of Maharashtra, it has various attractions that may attract to the foreign as well as domestic tourists. The Konkan region is situated in the western part of the Maharashtra State. It is located between the Arabian Sea to the West and Sahyadri Mountain to the East and has 700 km's coastline. Some people mention Konkan as a cursed land but if we mention as golden land to this land of Parshuram, it may not be wrong. The Konkan has Geography, History as well as cultural heritage and this is the advantage for the development of tourism in the region. In the Konkan region, tourism development has taken place in some extent only and this is not sustainable. The various beaches, forts, temples and waterfalls are main attraction of the tourists' in the Konkan. These factors are responsible for the development of tourism in Konkan region. A short review of tourism development in Konkan is as given below.

BEACHES:

There are many gorgeous beaches along the Konkan coast of the Maharashtra. Most of these beaches are not yet truly discovered by the tourists and are far better than the so-called popular beaches in India. The Alibag, Nagaon, Kashid, Kihim, Revdanda, Murud, Srivardhan, Harihareshwar, Bagmandla, Diveagar, Kelshi, Karde (Murud), Guhagar, Velneshwar, Hedvi, Ganpatipule, Bhandarpule, Ratnagiri, Bhatye, Malvan, Tarkarli,

Kunkeshwar, Mithbav and Vengurla - Mochamad are the some of the captivating beaches along the Konkan Coast. These beaches are attractive places to the domestic as well as foreign tourists. Most of the northern beaches are the weekend attractions to the people of Mumbai-Pune metropolitan region. It includes Alibag, Nagaon, Revdanda, Murud, Srivardhan, Harihareshwar, Bagmandla and Diveagar. The beautiful white sand of these beaches along with the cypress tree attract to the tourists in this region. Most of these beaches are clean and safe. The beaches of the southern Konkan are mostly attracting to the tourists from the plateau region of Maharashtra. The Alibag, Murud, Srivardhan, Harihareshwar, Diveagar, Guhagar, Velneshwar, Ganpatipule, Ratnagiri, Bhatye, and Kunkeshwar are some of the renowned beaches. These beaches attract to the foreign tourists at certain extent only.

FORTS:

Maharashtra's History, Culture and people would not be presented without the forts. The Great Maratha King **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj** who was a true visionary, realized the importance of Strategically located strong forts at a young age and went on to capture and build many forts in his struggle to establish a '**Hindavi Swarajya**'. Moreover, these forts are attractions to the tourists due to its archeological structure and morphology. In the Sahyadri Mountain and Konkan region, more than 100 forts are located but the forts like Alibag, Revdanda, Korlai, Khanderi, Janjira, Bankot, Suvarnadurga, Gopalgad, Jaygad, Ratnadurga, Purnagad, Vijaydurga, Raigad, Mahipatgad and Prachitgad are the well-known forts. In recent times, development of adventure and fort tourism took place in the locality. Due to the unplanned development of tourism around the forts, our valuable historical treasure is wasting.

TEMPLES:

Konkan has the religious milieu and known as the Land of 'Parshuram'. The various temples of the region attract to the religious tourists. The major temples of the Konkan region include Pavas, Parshuram, Chandikadevi (Dabhol), Ganga, Dhutpapeshwar, Kunkeshwar, Redi Ganpati, Marleshwar etc. These temples enhanced the development of

tourism in Konkan. In spite, ten temples of Ganpati are located in this region. They are- Hedvi – Guhagar, Jay Ganesh – Malvan, Redi Ganesh – Vengurla, Ganpatipule, Nandigramcha Siddhivinayak – Murud, Suvarna Ganesh - Diveagar, Kadyawarcha Ganpati – Anjarle, Mahaganpati – Thane, and also Asthavinayak Ganpati of Pali and Mahad.

WATERFALLS:

The high intensity of the rainfall and quite different type of topography formed due to the Sahyadri Mountain are the two important factors responsible for the development of waterfalls in the region. The rivers of the Konkan are short in length and have water during rainy season only. Hence, waterfalls are active during rainy season and that attracts to the tourists towards the region. Some of the significant waterfalls of the region are- Marleshwar, Garambi, Nivali, Pandavgat, Peb and Gavlideo. In addition to that, a numbers of tiny waterfalls are developed in the western ghat and formed fall line in the region.

SWOT ANALYSIS:

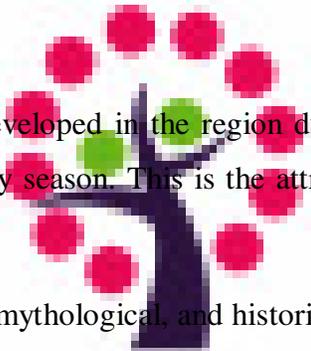
Tourism industry is one of the leading key sectors of economy in the world. Recently the development of tourism in some extent took place in the Konkan but it is not developed in genuine sense. However, there is an urgent need to view tourism of the Konkan in holistic sense beyond its national and global boundaries bringing together the stakeholders and retains tourism assets for future. Tourism is an important industry for many areas in the Konkan, it is also one that can developed based on local resources and has aided the development many areas. This development can be seen as beneficial in term of sustainable economic development but the reliance on tourism for sustainable economic development has strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. However, an attempt is made to the SWOT analysis of the Konkan tourism for its sustainable development.

STRENGTHS:

The Konkan region has the following strengths for the development of tourism:

- Total 700 km stretch of the coastline is available in the region.

- Development of Konkan Railway is also a positive factor for the development of sustainable tourism in the locality
- Numbers of beaches and other coastal landforms are developed along the Arabian Coast that may attract to the tourists
- Availability of the forts and sea forts is also strength for the development of tourism in the Konkan
- The Sahyadri Mountain is one of the biodiversity rich a region of the world is present in the Konkan and is beneficial for bio-tourism and eco-tourism in the region
- Numbers of waterfalls are developed in the region due to physiography and have abundance water during rainy season. This is the attractions to the tourists during rainy season.
- Konkan region has religious, mythological, and historical background and known as the land of Parshuram. Here temples of vigilant gods and deities are present and they attract virtuous tourists.
- Mumbai International airport is in the Konkan region and this is our plus point to attract foreign tourists
- Mumbai is the home of Bollywood, and many actors, designers and studios reside in Mumbai
- The Konkani Culture, residence and Konkani type meal is also our asset, which is not available anywhere in India
- The hot springs are present in the Konkan especially near Chiplun, Sangmeshwar, Rajapur, etc.



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WEAKNESSES:

The major weaknesses of the Konkan tourism are as given below:

- Psychology of the local people is the weakness for the sustainable tourism development in the locality
- Outmigration towards metropolitan cities like, Mumbai and Pune from the region is also a constraint for the development of sustainable tourism
- Undulating physiography of the region constraints to the development of transport network
- Other some of the key restrictions to the growth and development of sustainable tourism in the region includes lack of entrepreneurship among the local people, lack of innovations in the locality, lack of co-operation from the natives of the region, lack of analytical data and lack of quality human resources.

OPPORTUNITIES:

Following opportunities can be analyzed for the sustainable tourism development in the region:

- There is an immense scope for the development of eco-tourism, adventure tourism, geo-tourism, rural tourism, health tourism, winter tourism, disaster tourism, historical tourism, etc.
- Some of the tourist destinations are not yet truly discovered by the tourists. Hence there is scope for the development of tourism at such locations e.g. Prachitgad, Mahipatgad, etc.
- Proximity to Arabian Sea can enhance the ocean tourism in the locality.

THREATS:

The Konkan tourism faces following threats that may affect on the development of sustainable tourism:

- Encroachment from the outsiders in the tourism industry is the major threat in the region, it may cause loss of the environment and local people will not be benefitted.
- Mugging of our historical monuments and other treasures, e.g. in 1999 some foreigners visited to Bankot fort along with map. They stayed there for night, dug there at nighttime, and left the Bankot before morning. No one knowing the reason why they dug there?
- Environmental degradation due to conventional tourism development is also a threat that may affect on sustainability of the tourism in the locality.
- Competition with other Indian states like Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, etc. is also a threat. These states are developed as compare to the Konkan region of Maharashtra and have the ability of investment in the industry.
- Attack from terrorists may take place through the coastline in the region.
- Loss of beauty through the developmental projects in the locality, e.g. Thermal Energy Plants, Atomic Power Plants, etc.
- Perception of the various stakeholders towards tourism is the most important threat to the sustainable tourism development in the locality.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN KONKAN:

From the SWOT analysis, it is evident that the Konkan region has the great potentiality and opportunities for the development of tourism as a base of economic development. The Konkan region can take advantage of its strengths for its opportunities

for the sustainable development of tourism by using sustainable tourism development approach. Sustainability of the tourism primarily based on its ability to increase tourists' spends at the existing tourist destinations, like Ganpatipule, Alibag, Harihareshwar, etc. The following are the major recommendations for the sustainable tourism development that take advantage of its strengths and opportunities while reducing its threats and weaknesses.

CREATE VIABLE INVESTMENT ENVIRONMENT:

At present investment in the tourism industry in the Konkan region, by the government and private sector is less as compared to the states like, Goa and Kerala. Hence, promotion should be given to the investment in the tourism industry by the NGO's, private owners and local government. It may enhance the potentiality of the tourism industry in the locality. By this way we can make availability of hospitality to the group tours also, which is not available at most of the destinations at present.

TOURISM TRAINING PROGRAM:

The Konkan region has the lack of trained qualitative human resources and it is harmful for the sustainable tourism development. Due to unavailability of trained guides tourists are unable to get proper information about the destinations. Hence, this is the duty of the academic institutions as well as MTDC to initiate vacation training and short-term training course in the area. At the same time training of communication skills in mother tongue as well as foreign languages must be given. It may be helpful for the development of tourism having sustainable approach.

KONKANI FOOD PROCESSING TRAINING:

The Konkan region has its own specialty in the foods and beverages. Gum Ball (Dink Ladu), Flattened Parched Rice (Kandapohe, Dadpe Pohe), Vetch Sauce (Kultahaca Pithla), Rice Flat Bread (Tandlachi Bakari), Chili Sauce (Olya Mirchicha Kharda), Hot Tasty Cake of Flour (Thalipeeth), Bangada Fry, Fry Fish, Pomegranate Rice (Dalimb Bhat), Coconut Water (Naral Pani), Mangosteen Juice (Kokam Sarbat), Mangosteen Soda

(Kokam Soda), Mango Juice, Pinapal Juice, (Ghanekar, P. K.,) Matan-Vadhe, etc. are the some of the important foods and beverages of the region. The important fruits of the region include Rose apple, Jackfruit, Mango, Cashew nut, etc. However, at present encroachment of other foods and beverages, which are non-Konkani in nature is taking place. Even the present generation is missing the art of preparation of various Konkani foods and beverages. Because of this, here is an urgent need of Konkani Food Processing Training and tourism may create easy market to the Konkani food products and beverages. At the same times, focus should be given on the research related to preservation of these foods and beverages, for the odd season.

TOURISM INFORMATION SYSTEM (TIS):

Recently Geographical Information System (GIS) is getting relevance due to its applicability in planning. Based on GIS, e.g. Land Information System (LIS), Village Information System (VIS), etc. has been developed. Like that, if we initiated the Tourism Information System, it will be helpful for the planning and development of tourism industry in the Konkani region and sustainable tourism development will take place.

USE OF INTERNET FOR PUBLICITY:

In the 21st century, development in the science and technology took place and internet is the outcome of it. Another fact is that publicity is essential for the development of tourism in any region. Various states and regions forming their own website for the tourism and it is essential. The local government should create such types of websites and if it is not affordable, the free sources of publicity like face book, orkut etc. should be used.

FOCUS ON USE OF ECO-FRIENDLY PRODUCTS:

By taking into account need of environmental sustainability, the focus should be given on the use of eco-friendly products by the various stakeholders. For that purpose, strict laws should have shaped and applied in the locality otherwise sustainable tourism development will be dream only.

INCREASE IN STANDARD OF HOSPITALITY:

At present, the standard of hospitality provided to the tourists in the locality is not so good at certain places. This is also adversely affects on the frequency of visits by the tourists to the destination. Therefore, this is essential that by using local products like Bamboo separate standardized rooms and/or huts should be created. Because of this, the people from urban areas can complete their dream of second home, where they can feel free. In addition, only quality Konkani foods and beverages should make available that they can enjoy it and if desire carry with them. As a result, easy market will available to the Konkani products and beverages.

DISTRIBUTION OF LICENSES TO TRAINED PERSONS ONLY:

At present MTDC is distributing license to the people for the creation facilities for tourists viz. tourist resorts, tourist destinations and transportation. However, at the time of distribution of license preference should be given to the trained persons only that may provide qualitative service to the tourists.

CONSERVATION OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL ASSETS:

In recent years, especially in last 2-3 years the trend of domestic and foreign tourists towards the Konkani is increasing with the time. However, we should be aware about the problems that might be created by the tourism development and may affect on the natural environment and our valuable Konkani culture. If this happened, the Konkani will become Goa in short period of time. By taking in to account environmental and cultural sustainability, we should concentrate on the conservation of our natural and cultural assets that is essential for economic sustainability of the region.

RESEARCH AND STATISTICS:

For the sustainable development of the tourism in the Konkani region, the emphasis should be given on the interdisciplinary applied research. The academicians and researchers should have undertake the projects like, Tourism Information System, Market

Profiling and Analysis, Sustainable Tourism: Policies and Facts, Economic Impact Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment, Relevance of Tourism Awareness Programs at Micro Level, etc. In addition, every local government and/or other concern authorities maintain the records of the tourists visited to that place, it is beneficial for the planning.

PUBLIC AWARENESS:

Public awareness is an important factor in the sustainable development of tourism industry in any region. The people should have to know that tourists are our "Gold Egg Hen". However, we have to provide all the facilities to them with kind cooperation. If there is any doubt regarding the tourist then they have to inform to the nearest police station by this way we can check the attack by the terrorist.

CONCLUSION:

It is clear from above discussion that the Konkan region has the strength and opportunities for the sustainable tourism development and no doubt, it will overcome on the weaknesses and threats of the region. If we consider the recommendations given above, definitely Konkan will become California. Furthermore, sustainable development in the region will take place along with economic sustainability, environmental sustainability, Social sustainability and cultural sustainability.

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