

An overview of the alternative tourism potentials of Canacona, Goa-India

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Abstract

The state of Goa attracts tourists from all over the world as it renowned for its trifacta of sun, sand and sea. However, within the state of Goa, only certain coastal pockets, especially in coastal North Goa have been developed or rather over-developed from a tourism perspective while other scenic areas are overlooked. In order to ensure sustainable tourism, more emphasis should be placed on holistically developing alternative tourism in Goa. Canacona: the southern most taluka of Goa is geo-ecologically highly diversified. Apart from beaches, Canacona is also known for its lush green forest, waterfalls, wildlife, mangroves, backwaters, and rich cultural landscape. In the last two decades, attempts are made to promote Beach Tourism; hence, an attempt has been made in this paper to present an overview of the potential of promoting alternative tourism in Canacona more aggressively in order to divert the concentrated flow of tourists to beaches in Canacona.

Keywords: Goa, Tourism, Environment, Alternative tourism, Sustainability

Introduction

The state of Goa has a unique environment due to which it has created a special place on the tourist map of the World. The growth, expansion and development of tourism largely depend on Physical, Cultural/Social and Economic factors (Nadaf, 2020).

Tourism as an economic activity in Goa hardly existed before the 1960s. There were limited tourist facilities, either in the form of accommodation or other amenities. After its independence, the government initiated a program for rapid expansion of accommodation facilities and related tourist services, and beach tourism was adopted as a key sector for Goa's development. As a result, Goa became a major international tourist destination. The tourism industry has contributed significantly to the economic development of the territory, but also to the transformation of Goa's coastal areas, especially in North Goa. Instead of being an industry which brought in economic benefits to the local community, Goa was being exploited by those who saw in tourism a source of immense profit. This led to locals resisting further development of mainstream tourism due to environmental degradation, urbanization of coastal villages, issues of garbage, overcrowding of beaches, exploitation of workers, criminalization of tourist hotspots, abuse of women and children and the emergence of making Goa popular as an alcohol, sex and drug destination. (Soloman, 2009).

In the year 1980, about 3,32,534 domestic and 34,288 foreign tourists visited the State of Goa which increased to 7,76,993 domestic and 1,04,330 foreign tourists in 1990. Year 2000, attracted 9,76,804 Indian tourists and 2,91,709 international tourists. Further in 2010, the number of visitors sharply increased to 22,01,752 domestic tourists and 4,41,053 foreign tourists. According to provisional figures provided by the Department of Tourism, Government of Goa, the state received 8.06 million tourists in 2019, and until August 2020 the state had barely received 1.16 million tourists due to impact of Covid-19.

It is evident from the above figures that the Goan beaches are over-crowded and many beaches are carry tourists beyond their carrying capacities mostly in North Goa. Hence, to avoid the overcrowded North Goa scene, the South Goa, especially Canacona began getting attention in the past few decades. In Canacona, tourists could find pristine and scenic beaches in an idyllic rural setting. As the taluka of Canacona grew more popular, select locations mushroomed which attracted the on-flow of tourists. This resulted in traditional occupations being abandoned as youth and younger generations turned their focus on tourism and allied activities for income. In-migration of large unskilled workforce to cater to the rising industry also started becoming a cause for concern for the locals. (Gokhale, Sawant, & Ugavekar, 2014).

A response to the above could be alternate tourism, which could be ecotourism or cultural tourism or creative tourism. Alternative tourism "is a process which promotes a just form of travel between members of different communities. It seeks to achieve mutual understanding, solidarity and equality amongst participants" (Holden, 1984)