

Case study of goa tourism essay



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With the liberalization of the economy in 1990s and the subsequent growth of the Indian Industry, businesses started coming to Goa for their Conferences, Meetings and Events. This has led to a growth in the business of Conference Tourism in Goa and has unique features that have the potential to create a different brand personality of Goa as a Business Tourist Destination among the domestic businesses.

This paper attempts to look at the Destination of Goa which attracts Business Conferences, a trend that is seeing significant growth, both, during the season as well as during the off-season. An attempt has been made to do a qualitative study to identify the impact of Business Conferences on the brand personality of Goa.

A Case Study method is adopted to study the process of Business Conference organization to capture the personality type and personality creation which occurs among the Business Conference attendees. The creation of a “entertainment” personality of Brand Goa is seen as the dominant image which Goa has carved in the minds of the target segment, namely, the domestic businesses tourist.

INTRODUCTION

Branding and Brand Equity is a widely researched area in the Marketing literature. (Aaker, 1992; Keller, 1993). It has been argued that brands and branding create value, reduce consumer search costs, reduce risks for consumers and satisfy consumer needs. (Biswas, 1992; Berthon et al., 1999; Bhat and Reddy, 1998). Tourism destinations are also brands that tourists consume. Whether these brands are created or emerge on their own is a

debatable point both in academics as well as in practice. The role of branding process in creating a destination brand has been tried out in India (the Incredible India brand campaign in 2010) and has been researched in terms of destination brand (Cai, 2002). Tourism destinations are also perceived as a brand (Hosany, Ekinci, and Uysal, 2007) and as such can be amenable to marketing activities that enable the development of a specific brand image due to the actions of the destination marketers or the emergence of a specific brand image due to the actions of the (supply side) players and the actions of the (demand side) tourists. Due to slow rate of change in the demand for tourism products, which create the image in the first place, the change in the image of the destination is also slow. However such changes in the product portfolio of a destination have the potential to bring about a change in the image of the destination to various segments of tourists. This article tried to look at the conceptual aspect of Brand Personality, Destination Product Portfolio and impact of specific products (Conference and Business Tourism) on Brand Personality.

LITERATURE REVIEW.

Keller (1993) identifies brand image as “ the perceptions about a brand reflected as associations existing in the memory of the consumer”. These associations are formed either through direct experience or through information sources or through the inferences from already existing associations (Martinez and Pina, 2003). Destination product portfolio generates these associations in terms of giving a direct experience to the visitors to form brand related associations and it is then used in the information sources to create strong associations of the brand to create a

brand image. The usage of Taj Mahal, the historic monument, as a symbol of Regency in India is to create the image of the “ Exquisite nature of India” and this is done not only in the tourism information sources but is used by many products and services in India symbolically.(Taj Mahal Tea, Taj Group of Hotels, etc.,) Destination image which is the perception about a brand is impacted by the destination brand identity as sought to be created by the supply side players at the destination. Keller (2008) identifies brand image as consisting of (1) user profiles, (2) purchase and usage situations, (3) personality and values, and (4) history, heritage and experiences. In a destination image situation all the four aspects given above fit into the creation of a destination image even as the same aspects are available with the supply side players to create a brand identity. The conceptual aspect here to be studied is the role that image perceivers have in the creation of a brand identity. This essentially means that the brand identity sought to be created by the firm/supply side player is actually a perception which the visitor has about the product she envisages to experience. This is more so in business and conference tourism because the product i. e. convention, conference, workshops etc. are co-created as in a service situation. Most conventions and other business get-togethers are created by the firm and the destination product manager to create an experience for the visitors. Due to the strong economic situation in India and due to the emerging economy that India has been in the last decade, there has been a greater emphasis on the firms to offer to its associates situations and experiences which are rewarding and educative in the form of business conventions at exotic locales in the country. Goa which is an internationally acclaimed tourist destination is one of such locales where there is a good amount of

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business conference/convention activities which are organized by various firms as a means to appreciate the efforts of its associates and employees. These conventions are of a Leisure-Business orientation. The study is a conceptual one to identify the impact that these conventions have on the brand personality and brand identity/image of Goa.

METHODOLOGY

The study being conceptual it was thought prudent to use a qualitative approach to the study and hence a case study approach is being taken up. Goa as a destination is chosen to understand the flow of business and convention tourism and the shape it is taking as there has been an influx of business tourism products into Goa in the last few years. Though there has been no statistical history or statistical study done to identify the type and number of business tourism visitors, expert opinion of the players in the market, both, stake holders as well as destination marketers, has been taken to identify the creation of the destination image for the business and conference tourists. Experts from the hotel industry, event management industry and the Department of Tourism which is the nodal agency to monitor and supplement tourism from the Government's side has been targeted for opinions and views which would be the basis for exploring the role of destination image creation and its impact on the destination image of Goa.

GOA: CASE FOR BUSINESS TOURISM

Tourism in Goa.

Politically, Goa became a part of India in 1961. It was under the Portuguese rule for more than four centuries before that. It is the smallest state of India.
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It was given Statehood in the year 1987 and prior to this it was considered as a Union Territory along with Daman and Diu which were also ruled by the Portuguese till 1961. Goa has area of 3702 square kilometers and has a lovely pristine beach length of 105 kilometers. Goa as a state is surrounded by the Sea to the west, by the state of Maharashtra to the north and by the state of Karnataka to the south and east. Geographically Goa can be categorized under three distinct areas v. i. z., the Western Ghats (An ecological and biodiversity region of the mountains) towards the east and south, the midlands and the coastal region. Goa has a population of about 1.45 million according to the quick estimates of the 2011 Census. Politically Goa is divided into two districts, North Goa and South Goa. The state comprises of 11 Talukas (Smaller political/administrative divisions of the state) and 189 Village Panchayats (Local Self Governments).

This is the geo-political structure of Goa. In terms of economics, Goa, which is the smallest state of India in area and fourth smallest in population, has the highest per-capita income in the country. (http://unidow.com/india%20home%20eng/statewise_gdp.html). The major economic sectors are the Primary sector (Agriculture, Mining, Fisheries and Dairy farming) which contributes 11.39% of the state's GDP (2009-2010 at Constant Prices), the Secondary sector (Industries, SMEs, etc.) contributing 37.73% (2009-2010 at Constant Prices) and the Tertiary sector (Services inclusive of Tourism) contributing a total of 50.88% (2009-2010 at Constant Prices). 2 (<http://www.goa.gov.in/pdf/goa-esurvey-2010-2011.pdf>). In terms of growth of the sectors the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors grew by 2.38%, 5.05% and 20.63% respectively in 2009-10.

Tourism Growth

Over the years the domestic tourism and foreign tourism increased and by the year 1985 organised tourism in terms of foreign Charter Flights started. 24 Chartered flights operated in the year 1985-86 bringing in 3568 foreign tourists with them. Though this was a minute part of the total foreign tourists in the state (3.85%) it was a beginning which would lead to the Charter Foreign Tourists forming 45.3% of the total foreign tourists in 2007. Though the ratio of Domestic Tourists to Foreign Tourists is 4:1 the average stay of the foreign tourists is generally higher. The domestic tourists stay for an average of 5 days while the average stay for the foreign tourists is 9 days. This also increases the visibility of the foreign tourists which creates an impression that there are more foreign tourists visiting the state of Goa. The chart given at the end of the paper gives the growth of tourism in Goa from 1985 to 2010.

Business and Conference tourism was not a part of the tourism scenario in a significant way till the CHOGM meet (Commonwealth Heads of Governments) in 1983. This was one of the major events to happen though not connected with Business Tourism. Since then there has been an increase in the Business and Conference tourism in Goa though there has been no attempt to identify the growth in statistical terms. The tourism industry has on its own given a boost to the business and conference tourism by enhancing the capabilities of the private infrastructure such as Hotel Conference halls, Event management etc., and tried to encourage a larger business visitor profile for Goa.

The industry experts view Business Tourism as a nascent offspring in tourism in Goa. There have been a number of conferences and meets in Goa that are targeted at the Business Tourist. The experts identify that at least 700-800 such small and medium Conferences/Meets/ Dealer workshops are conducted all over Goa in a Calender year. Most of these are conducted from June to October as this is the lean season for tourism and as such the facilities associated with the hotel (rooms and other infrastructure) are available.

The target market for these conferences to a large extent has been the Pharma companies and also Dealers of different business organizations who converge on Goa to conduct their Sales meets or Year End meets. Most of the target market is in Delhi and Mumbai, the two most important cities as far as Business is concerned. The entire product (Conference or Dealer meet) is co-created by the Customer (business organization), the service provider (Hotel) and the Event Management organization. Most of the entertainment and other services are provided by the Event Management organization which is a part of the product creation process. Fire Dancers, Belly Dancers etc., are organized by the Event Management companies as part of the Conference. The product so created has the potential to define " value" to its customers and as such has the potential to impact the kind of image that customers seek in such situations. Most of the customers, according to industry experts, are from the socio-economic class B1 and B2 (SEC B1 & B2) as per MRSI (2011) <http://mrsi.in/sec.html>.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The difference between a brand and a commodity is the idea of added values (Meldrum and McDonald, 1995). These added values are associated with consumer demands in various ways. The added values are those that create the intrinsic brand personality that seeks to distinguish different brands though they could be functionally the same. In tourism, the destination personality is used to leverage the perceived image of the place and in helping tourists choose the destination in the first place (Crockett and Wood, 2002). Brand image and brand personality have been used interchangeably (Hendon and Williams, 1985) and brand image is generally synonymous with either the brand's strategic personality or its reputation as a whole (Upshaw, 1995, p. 14). Keller (2008) has identified brand image as consisting of (1) user profiles, (2) purchase and usage situations, (3) personality and values, and (4) history, heritage and experiences. Goa and its history of tourism can be analyzed through this quartet of dimensions.

Business tourists coming to Goa according to the industry experts are mostly from the SEC B1 and B2 categories. The customers are Graduates/Post-graduates, Skilled, Executives or people in Sales / Supervisory or Junior/senior executives. Entrepreneurs in terms of those who employ less than 10 people are also considered under this classification. Since there are a large number of small business meets and conferences happening in Goa the creation of a product (Business conference) in this case is entirely a co-creation between the organization and the service provider. Usually the Hotel has a Sales in-charge associated with Business and Conference tourism and he/she initiates the process of identifying such potential in the market.

The Sales-in-charge would then proceed to interact with the consumer (organization) and find out the requirements. These would include the venue requirements in terms of type of food, place, facilities etc. It also includes the entertainment which is then outsourced to an event management organization with which the hotel has an association. Given this process the customer's say in the creation of the business conference tourism experience is intrinsic. The consumer (Organization) desires to have an experience that caters or satisfies the participants based on its understanding of the people whom it is organizing the conference for, e. g., Trade meet (for its distributors), Dealer's meet (for its Dealers), Annual meet (for its Sales people), Quarterly meet (for various departments of the organization) etc. Goa's business tourism segment comprises of the above mentioned types of meets and conferences and has resulted in the user profile designing the conference experience for itself. This will go a long way in creating a competence for the hotel/event management organization which is co-creating the experience thereby trying to ensure future conference and meets having similar themes. It's a known fact that once the learning curve is peaked then it is easy to perform with lower costs thereby increasing the profitability to create the experience across different situations and across different customer segments.

Goa has long been known as a leisure and fun tourist destination among the foreign and domestic tourists. The Tourism Master Plan (2001) had identified attraction preferences of tourists visiting Goa. 66% domestic tourists preferred the sea side while 48% preferred heritage sites. 60% foreign tourists preferred sea side. Having a leisure focus and getting business

tourists to the destination requires a mix of leisure-cum-business. It is precisely this aspect that has appealed to the consumers (organizations) to help them co-create the Business Conference experience. This experience created across the 700-800 small business conferences across the state of Goa has the potential to create an image for itself as far as “ business-cum-leisure” tourism is concerned. In almost all the business meets and conferences the fire dancers and belly dancers that are brought in from outside of Goa perform to entertain the conference/business meet participants. This has initiated a strong preference from the customer’s (organization) side to have such performances as part of the business meet/conference experience. This has the potential to spiral into a destination image through word of mouth publicity on the type and content of business tourism experience at destination Goa. One can see the subtle change in touristic behavior that impacts some stakeholders in so far as the Casino Tourism is seen. The offshore Casinos that started in Goa a few years ago are slowly impacting the image of Goa in certain segments of tourists. Though nascent there is scope for the destination to identify the major impacting elements that lead to the co-creation of the image with respect to Business Conference tourism. The process of image creation or rather experience creation and its impact on the image of the destination is an area for further research. Though this article is more conceptual there is a good potential to undertake research from a service marketing point of view, an economic point of view (Resource utilization) and also from a social point of view.

Conclusions.

Though Goa is not considered as a “ Business and Convention Tourism Destination” there are small efforts being undertaken by the stakeholders in Tourism at Goa to ensure that there is a combination of Business and Pleasure for the business tourists at Goa. In pursuit of that, there is a strong experience co-creation by the stakeholders and the consumers, which is leading to a subtle image formation and destination brand personality of Goa. The subtlety is of prime importance as it does not lend itself to defined intervention to create a specific image as is done with brands in the marketing parlance. This in turn has the potential to create a brand image / brand personality for Goa which cannot be controlled to deliver a strong competitive advantage vis-à-vis other business destinations. Industry experts point out that in order to change the image to have specific aspects of Business tourism highlighted there is a strong need to create quality infrastructure in Goa. Industry experts also point out that at best each of the 5 star category hotels has a Convention hall with a seating capacity of about 1000. In order to create a strong brand image of a Business Tourism destination it is pointed out that such halls need to be of at least 20, 000- 30, 000 seating capacity. That is the kind of direction which needs to be undertaken if one has to have a strong impact on the destination image. However the subtle impacts that are seen due to the co-creation of the business tourism experience also have to be borne in mind since their impact has an “ emerging” trend rather than a “ planned” one.

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