

ATTRIBUTES OF DESTINATION IMAGE FOR TOURISTS
LEISURE: A STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO TOURISTS OF
GOA

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ABSTRACT:

The paper explores the concept of destination image with regard to leisure tourism. Destination image studies are incomplete without studying the functional and psychological attributes which make up the overall image of the place. This paper limits itself to finding out the importance tourists' associate with each of these attributes when it comes to their choice of a destination to holiday. The study is conducted on tourists, both domestic as well as foreign who visited Goa for leisure.

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Introduction:

Goa has been a state on the forefront of promoting tourism over the last 4 decades. Tourism in the state has evolved from being place where foreign tourists would come to seek Nirvana to the present day where Goa is considered India's ultimate party destination with beautiful beaches. What started off as basic beach tourism is today marketed as a place which offers a lot more than that. For all the changes that have occurred in the way the state has been marketed over the decades, Goa is still regarded as one of India's best leisure tourist destination. The state today is facing a lot of competition from other destinations in India like Kerala, Rajasthan, Maharashtra etc. and international destinations like Thailand, Sri Lanka, Malaysia etc. And in order to remain a top choice for tourists in this competitive environment, tourism marketers in Goa need to continuously improve the way the place is branded and marketed. Destination image is one of the key factors in branding a place. How the image of a place is perceived by tourists will determine the choice they make in the place he or she would visit. It is a must for tourism marketers to be aware of attributes of destination image which contribute to the overall image of the place. This will help tourism marketers develop a better promotional strategy with a greater focus on those attributes of image which are more important to tourists.

The basic objective of this paper to find out the importance given by tourists' both foreign and domestic to various attributes which contribute to the overall image of a destination. The paper is more relevant to Goa and focuses only on tourists, both domestic as well as foreign who visit the state for leisure.

1. Leisure Tourism.

Travel is one of the most commonly listed interests of people, and it comes in all forms. Some people travel only when they need to visit relatives or friends, others travel on business, and some travel as a sort of spiritual discipline, to discover new things about the world and its cultures and to learn more about themselves in the crucible that is travel. Yet for some, none of these things is that important: To these people, travel is about fun and excitement, about rest and relaxation, and about whatever they want it to be about.

Leisure travel is travel in which the primary motivation is to take a vacation from everyday life. Leisure travel is often characterized by staying in nice hotels or resorts, relaxing on beaches or in

a room, or going on guided tours and experiencing local tourist attractions. Most meals are eaten out when traveling for pleasure, and often more expensive modes of transportation, such as taxis, are used to get around. In some cases, leisure travel might be used to refer to any trip that lasts more than a week, regardless of the primary focus. Leisure travel is generally seen as the opposite of business travel.

There are many benefits to leisure travel. Stepping outside of a busy lifestyle can give people space to unwind and release their stress, returning to their jobs and everyday lives rejuvenated and refreshed. It also can give people the opportunity to experience parts of the world they have never seen before, enriching their understanding of life on the planet. Traveling can be an excellent way to meet new people and make new connections, and leisure travel gives people the space and time they need to really forge those bonds.

2.1 Destination image

Destination image is a vital concept in tourism marketing literature which should be developed further through marketing research. Earlier works on this topic provide a narrow definition of destination which described it as well-defined geographical areas such as a country, an island or a town (Hall, 2000; Davidson & Maitland, 1997). However, recent definition of destination expands to include a perceptual concept of destination which can be interpreted subjectively by tourists depending on their travel itinerary, cultural background, and purpose of visit, educational level and past experience. According to Buhalis (2000), tourism destination consists of six components: attractions (natural, man-made, artificial, purpose built, heritage, special events), accessibility (entire transportation system comprising of routes, terminals and vehicles), amenities (accommodation and catering facilities, retailing, other tourists service), activities (all activities available at the destination and what consumers will do during their visits), ancillary services (services used by tourists such as banks, telecommunication, post, newsagent, hospital, etc.) and available packages (pre-arranged packages by intermediaries and principals). According to Choi *et al.* (1999), destination image is people's belief, idea or impression about a place. This definition is parallel to the one defined by Echtner and Ritchie (1993) as consisting two main components comprising those that are attribute-based and those that are holistic. Each of these components contains functional, more tangible aspects of destination image, and psychological represent the more abstract aspects of destination image characteristics.

2.2 The components of destination image

What are the important components or dimensions of destination image and how do people structure their understanding of destinations? Mayo (1975) found that there are three basic dimensions of holiday destination images: scenery, congestion and climate. Like most tourist destination studies, Mayo's dimensions focus on physical or functional characteristics that are directly observable or measurable, for example, prices, size, and climate. Few studies have attempted to include the less tangible components of destination image or the difficult-to-measure psychological characteristics, such as the atmosphere or romance of the setting (Echtner and Ritchie, 1991). Ross (1994, p. 78) comments that the only psychological variable measured in the majority of studies is 'friendliness' of locals. Common functional attributes include traits by which most destinations can be compared (e.g. Price, climate, types of accommodation). Common Psychological or abstract attributes consist of the friendliness of the locals, notoriety or beauty of the landscape. One of the basic problems of tourist destination image research is that destination images are 'holistic' representations of a place and that in attempting to measure them, researchers are compelled to look at the parts or attributes singularly. At one end of the dimension are functional and psychological attributes, and at the other end are the functional and psychological holistic images concerning the overall impressions, the atmosphere or mood.

Over the years various researchers have studied Destination image and a majority of these studies relied on measuring the various attributes (both functional as well as psychological) of destination image. A comprehensive list of all these attributes used by past researchers are shown in Fig 1. The attributes listed in Fig 1 range from the Functional i.e the factors which are physical and measurable to the factors which are more Psychological (Abstract).

FIG -1

FUNCTIONAL (physical, measurable)



PSYCHOLOGICAL (abstract)

Chi, C. G.Qing, & Qu, H. (2008) classified all these attributes into nine aspects, 1)Travel Environment2)Natural Attractions3)Entertainment and Events4)Historic Attractions5)Infrastructure 6)Accessibility 7)Relaxation 8)Outdoor Activities 9)Price and Value.

3. Method

A survey was conducted on Domestic Tourists and Foreign Tourists who were on a visit to Goa during the month of March, April and May 2015. The objective of the survey was to identify the factors which are important to tourists when choosing a leisure destination for a holiday. A total of 100 foreign tourists and 200 domestic tourists participated in this survey. The sample included 40% Female respondents and 60% Male respondents for both foreign as well as domestic tourist samples. A convenience sampling method was used for conducting this survey. All the tourists were approached at various spots frequented by tourists like beaches, waterpark, shacks and hotels. The entire survey was conducted in North Goa which is more popular among the tourists as compared to South Goa. A likert scale (1-5) was used in the questionnaire where different factors were rated in terms of their importance to the tourists. 1- Least Important, 3- Neutral and 5- Most Important. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The mean, Standard error, Standard deviation, Kurtosis and Skewness of the data collected is shown below in form of Table I to Table XII. For the purpose of my study the 9 aspects of destination image by, Chi, C. G.Qing, & Qu, H. (2008) have been further reduced to 6 by clubbing together Entertainment, Events and Outdoor Activities, Accessibility has been clubbed with Infrastructure and Relaxation has been clubbed with Travel Environment. All the 33 factors depicted in Fig. 1 have been further attached to one of these 6 aspects.

- (1) Travel Environment (Crowdedness, Cleanliness, Personal Safety, Degree of Urbanization, Extent of Commercialization, Political Stability, Hospitality/Friendliness/Receptiveness, Climate, Family or Adult Oriented, Restful/Relaxing, Atmosphere (Familiar versus Exotic), Economic Development/Affluence, Opportunity for Adventure, Opportunity to Increase Knowledge, Quality of Service);
- (2) Natural Attractions (Scenery, Beaches)

- (3) Entertainment, Events and Activities (Nightlife and Entertainment, Sports Facilities/Activities, National Parks/Wilderness Activities, Fairs/ Exhibits/ Festivals, Tourist Sites/Activities
- (4) Historic Attractions (Historic Sites/Museums, Architecture/Buildings)
- (5) Infrastructure and Accessibility (Shopping Facilities, Accommodation Facilities, Cities, Different Cuisine/Food and Drink Local Infrastructure/Transportation, Accessibility, Facilities for Information and Tours,)
- (6) Price and Value (Costs/Price Levels).

The findings have been represented below for each of the 6 aspects for both Foreign as well as domestic tourists. Image attributes attached to each of these 6 factors have been listed in the descending order of their calculated mean scores of importance ratings given by the tourists.

4. Findings

Findings for Foreign tourists

TABLE I

Factors Important to Foreign Tourists (Travel Environment)	Mean	Standard Error	Standard Deviation	Kurtosis	Skewness
Climatic Conditions	4.53	0.104313	0.571346	-0.42941	-0.7325
Opportunity to Increase Knowledge	4.27	0.135046	0.73968	1.635377	-1.02815
Restful/ Relaxing	4.2	0.111417	0.610257	-0.29835	-0.11705
Quality of service	4.13	0.171091	0.937102	-0.20129	-0.81969
Friendliness/ Hospitality	4	0.15902	0.870988	-0.83123	-0.33549
Atmosphere (Familiar vs. Exotic)	4	0.143839	0.787839	-0.0341	-0.45332
Personal safety	3.97	0.169403	0.927857	-1.26361	-0.20823
Customs/ Culture	3.6	0.163299	0.894427	1.101875	-0.32219
Political Stability	3.57	0.156714	0.85836	-0.48408	-0.0457

Cleanliness of the destination	3.53	0.149584	0.819307	-0.25217	-0.51712
Degree of Urbanization	3.53	0.171091	0.937102	-0.77336	0.031527
Crowdedness	3.37	0.147651	0.808717	-0.34306	0.045947
Economic Development	3.3	0.136878	0.749713	-0.95653	-0.56814
Family Oriented	3.03	0.188663	1.033352	0.140121	-0.67293
Extent of Commercialization	2.93	0.185282	1.014833	-0.62317	0.352866
Opportunity for Adventure	2.87	0.228606	1.252125	-0.57708	0.381254

TABLE II

Factors Important to Foreign Tourists (Natural Attractions)	Mean	Standard Error	Standard Deviation	Kurtosis	Skewness
Beaches	4.67	0.110727	0.606478	1.958147	-1.69303
Natural Attractions/ Scenery	3.8	0.138962	0.761124	-0.23094	-0.14077

TABLE III

Factors Important to Foreign Tourists (Entertainment, Events and Activities)	Mean	Standard Error	Standard Deviation	Kurtosis	Skewness
Night Life and Entertainment	4.4	0.140606	0.770132	-0.73068	-0.85415
Fares/ exhibits/ festivals	4	0.185695	1.017095	-0.72116	-0.63205
Tourist Activities	3.97	0.155241	0.850287	0.185236	-0.65521
Sports Facilities	3.93	0.203042	1.112107	0.357256	-0.98897
Shopping Facility	3.73	0.191385	1.048261	-1.16208	-0.19045
National Parks/ Wilderness Activities	2.83	0.173426	0.949894	0.210765	0.613066

TABLE IV

Factors Important to Foreign Tourists (Infrastructure and Accessibility)	Mean	Standard Error	Standard Deviation	Kurtosis	Skewness
Offer of Local Cuisines	4.2	0.130428	0.714384	0.91122	-0.31617
Quality of Accommodation	4.07	0.11679	0.639684	0.35173	-0.05395
Accessibility	3.97	0.169403	0.927857	0.62261	-0.48574
Facilities for Information and Tours	3.77	0.170754	0.935261	0.66393	-0.30991
Shopping Facility	3.73	0.191385	1.048261	1.16208	-0.19045
local Infrastructure/transportation service	3.7	0.192682	1.055364	0.08114	-0.66382
Cities	3.6	0.195348	1.069966	0.30219	-0.36918

TABLE V

Factors Important to Foreign Tourists (Historic Attractions)	Mean	Standard Error	Standard Deviation	Kurtosis	Skewness
Historic Buildings/ Architecture	3.63	0.162476	0.889918	-0.59003	-0.11836
Museums/ Historic Sites	2.5	0.17779	0.973795	0.241952	0.720171

TABLE VI

Factors Important to Foreign Tourists (Price/ Value)	Mean	Standard Error	Standard Deviation	Kurtosis	Skewness
Cost/ Price level	4.1	0.15425	0.844863	0.38577	-0.56608

Findings for Domestic tourists**TABLE VII**

Factors Important to Domestic Tourists (Travel Environment)	Mean	Standard Error	Standard Deviation	Kutosis	Skewness
Restful/ Relaxing	4.13	0.201907	1.105888	2.54127 4	-1.59142
Opportunity for Adventure	4.1	0.175185	0.959526	-1.24499	-0.4617
Climatic Conditions	3.9	0.146609	0.803012	-1.406	0.188367
Quality of service	3.8	0.188155	1.030567	0.22534 5	-0.58328
Customs/ Culture	3.77	0.170754	0.935261	-0.66393	-0.30991
Crowdedness	3.67	0.187747	1.028334	0.23690 3	-0.68705
Cleanliness of the destination	3.6	0.176817	0.968468	-1.00271	0.18547
Personal safety	3.53	0.141692	0.776079	-0.23175	0.118736
Family Oriented	3.47	0.196131	1.074255	-0.50042	-0.35471
Friendliness/ Hospitality	3.3	0.180357	0.987857	-0.22766	-0.20236
Economic Development	3.3	0.198558	1.087547	-0.35805	-0.47909
Opportunity to Increase Knowledge	2.6	0.217615	1.191927	-0.2803	0.596942
Extent of Commercialization	2.5	0.171203	0.937715	0.55110 7	0.403269

Degree of Urbanization	2.43	0.132902	0.727932	-0.23217	-0.32737
Political Stability	2.4	0.217615	1.191927	0.22410 6	0.712142
Atmosphere (Familiar vs. Exotic)	2.23	0.163885	0.897634	-0.77824	0.115559

TABLE VIII

Factors Important to Domestic Tourists (Natural Attractions)	Mean	Standard Error	Standard Deviation	Kutosis	Skewness
Beaches	4.7	0.108808	0.595963	2.74611 1	1.906027
Natural Attractions/ Scenery	4.27	0.151113	0.827682	0.35035 4	-0.94234

TABLE IX

Factors Important to Domestic Tourists (Entertainment, Events and Activities)	Mean	Standard Error	Standard Deviation	Kutosis	Skewness
Night Life and Entertainment	4.63	0.112274	0.614948	1.33156 6	-1.50259
Tourist Activities	4.37	0.155241	0.850287	2.26273 3	-1.53507
Fares/ exhibits/ festivals	4.03	0.169403	0.927857	-0.43947	-0.62429
Shopping Facility	3.83	0.179932	0.985527	1.26863 3	-1.03355
National Parks/ Wilderness Activities	3.4	0.195348	1.069966	-1.23432	0.007239
Sports Facilities	1.97	0.162476	0.889918	3.30567 4	1.326165

TABLE X

Factors Important to Domestic Tourists (Infrastructure and Accessibility)	Mean	Standard Error	Standard Deviation	Kutosis	Skewness
Offer of Local Cuisines	4.2	0.130428	0.714384	-0.91122	-0.31617
Quality of Accommodation	3.9	0.16153	0.884736	-1.0685	-0.11523
Shopping Facility	3.83	0.179932	0.985527	1.26863 3	-1.03355
local Infrastructure/transportation service	3.67	0.161411	0.884087	-0.77589	0.095051
Facilities for Information and Tours	3.63	0.155241	0.850287	-0.85351	0.453281
Accessibility	3.6	0.163299	0.894427	-0.80699	0.297408
Cities	2.5	0.196229	1.074789	0.31439 8	0.446361

TABLE XI

Factors Important to Domestic Tourists (Price/ Value)	Mean	Standard Error	Standard Deviation	Kutosis	Skewness
Cost/ Price level	3.83	0.179932	0.985527	-0.88975	-0.3388

TABLE XII

Factors Important to Domestic Tourists (Historic Attractions)	Mean	Standard Error	Standard Deviation	Kutosis	Skewness
Historic Buildings/ Architecture	3.83	0.179932	0.985527	-0.53002	-0.57039
Museums/ Historic Sites	3.5	0.164352	0.900192	-0.63223	-0.30389

Analysis:

It was observed that in the aspect, 'Travel Environment', both Domestic tourists as well as Foreign tourists gave almost equal importance to factors like Climatic conditions, Restful nature of the place and Quality of service. But foreign tourists attached a high importance for factors such as hospitality, opportunity to increase knowledge and Personal Safety as compared to domestic tourists. For the same aspect the foreign tourists rated the factors; Family Oriented Nature of the Place, Extent of Commercialization and Opportunity for Adventure as the least important factors. Domestic tourists of the other hand rated factors such as Opportunity to increase knowledge, Extent of Commercialization, Degree of Urbanization, Political Stability and the Exotic nature of the place as the least important factors. Even though it's difficult to pinpoint the exact reason for this distinction, it can be attributed to the demographic profile of the foreign tourists and the domestic tourists who visit Goa. The foreign tourists are mostly elderly retired folks who come to Goa to relax and enjoy a low cost holiday. Whereas the domestic tourist varies from young urban working professionals to middle aged people who come with their families. Their needs would vary accordingly.

For the aspect 'Natural Attraction', both domestic and foreign tourists attached high importance to the factors Beaches and Scenery. This is not surprising as the tourists surveyed were on a visit to Goa and Goa is famous more for its beaches and natural beauty.

Foreign tourists as well as Domestic tourists rated Night Life and Entertainment as the most important factor in the aspect 'Entertainment, Events and Activities'. This was on expected lines as Goa is popular as the best party destination of India. The foreign tourists rated wilderness activities as not important which came as a little bit of a surprise considering how Goa government is also promoting adventure tourism. But the fact that this survey was conducted among the tourists in beach belt of North Goa may have played a part in this. The Domestic tourists rated Sports activities as the least important and this was on expected lines.

For the aspect, 'Infrastructure and Accessibility' there was a convergence between the foreign and domestic tourists for the importance they would attach to each of the factors attached to it. All the factors such as Local Cuisines, Quality of Accommodation, Accessibility, Facilities for information and tours, Shopping facilities, Local transport were rated high on importance by

both the domestic as well as the foreign tourists. The only distinction was for the factor, 'City', where domestic tourists rated it as a factor that was not important. This poor rating for the factor, 'City' by domestic tourists could be because a lot of the domestic tourists surveyed were young working professionals from big cities like Mumbai, Bangalore and Delhi and coming to Goa was more to get away from their hectic city life.

For the aspect, 'Historic Attractions', the domestic tourists rated both factors, i.e. Historic Buildings and Museums as important. The foreign tourists however rated Museums as a factor that was not important to them. There can be no explanation to this bit of finding except that foreign tourists who visit Goa prefer to remain confined to the beach belt. But this can be probed further.

The final aspect, i.e. 'Price/ Value', both the foreign as well domestic tourists attach a very high importance to it. But it was observed that it was more important to foreign tourists as compared to domestic tourists. The reason for this could be because the foreign tourists which Goa attracts are from the lower income groups, who look at Goa as a cheap destination to spend their holiday. The domestic tourists on the other hand who visit Goa are not confined to one income group. At one extreme are high spending domestic tourists who stay in high luxury resorts and at the other extreme are low spending tourists who look for the cheapest lodging options possible.

5. Conclusion:

If we look at all the factors of destination image together we can conclude from the survey that foreign tourist's rate, Beaches, Climatic Conditions, Night Life, Opportunity to increase knowledge, Local Cuisines, Relaxing, Cost, Quality of Accommodation, Festivals and Hospitality as the most important factors when choosing a leisure holiday destination. Factors such as Extent of Commercialization, Opportunity for Adventure, Reputation, National parks and Museums were rated as the least important in their choice of holiday destination. The domestic tourists of the other hand rated Beaches, Night Life, Tourist Activities, Natural Attractions, Local Cuisines, Opportunity for Adventure and Festivals as the most important factors in their choice of leisure travel destination whereas factors such as Opportunity to Increase Knowledge, Cities, Extent of Commercialization, Degree of Urbanization, Political Stability, Atmosphere (Familiar vs Exotic), Reputation and Sports Facilities were rated as the least important factors.

Even though the study was to understand the importance of various factors of destination image to tourists when choosing a leisure destination, the study is confined only to Goa as a leisure tourist destination. The findings will be more in line with tourist expectations with respect to Goa as a leisure tourist destination.

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