

A Study on the Destination Image of Goa from the perception of Domestic Tourists

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ABSTRACT

The paper explores the destination image of Goa from the perception of Domestic tourists who visit the state for leisure. It has been proven by various researchers that the perceived image of a destination is one of the most important reasons for a tourist to choose a place he or she would want to visit. The paper explores the destination image of Goa from the perception of domestic tourists in relation to the 33 attributes of destination image which have been identified by past researchers on this topic. A survey was conducted on Domestic Tourists who were on a visit to Goa. The tourists were administered a questionnaire asking them to rate the 33 identified components of destination image on a likert scale. The objective of the survey was to measure the destination image of Goa. A random sampling method was used for conducting this survey. The collected data was analysed using Principal Component Factor Analysis. The factor analysis reduced the 33 components into 5 factors; 1) Travel Environment 2) Infrastructure and Cost 3) Entertainment, Events and Activities 4) Historic Attractions and 5) Natural Attractions. The data was further analyzed using descriptive statistics to understand the image of the each of the components within each of these 5 identified factors. Based on the factor analysis, the factor, Travel Environment explains the maximum percentage of variance and the factor Natural Attractions explains the least percentage of variance. The further analysis of data further reveals that Goa's image as a destination of beautiful beaches and a buzzing night life is strong entrenched in the minds of the tourists visiting Goa. But Goa's image is taking a hit for components of destination image; Crowdedness, Family Oriented nature of the destination, Extent of Commercialization, Cost and Facilities for Information/ Tours.

Introduction:

Goa, the tiny coastal state of India has been on the forefront of promoting tourism over the last 40 years. 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. In order to remain a top choice for tourists, 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 destination is perceived by tourists will determine the choice they make in the destination he or she would visit. Over the recent years (2013 onwards) domestic tourist inflow into the state has grown exponentially. From a figure of 2629151 domestic tourists in the year 2013, the figure almost doubled with a total of 4756422 domestic tourists in the year 2015. While this looks like a very happy situation for Goa tourism, there has been a lot of criticism of this unplanned growth. Critics from the hospitality and tourism sector feel that Goa is becoming a mass tourism destination attracting a huge number of low spending tourists. They believe that these tourists don't add much value to the local economy besides causing a lot of strain on the limited infrastructure. They also feel that this growth in mass tourism is keeping away high spending foreign tourists. To add weight to this point of view, the growth of foreign tourists during the same period has stagnated and in fact declined for tourists from certain countries. While Goa Tourism has always maintained that its main objective is to position Goa as a high end tourist destination there has been limited progress in this regard. For the tourism department and tourism marketers to achieve this it is a must for them to be aware of the image Goa is projecting and how this image is perceived by tourists who visit the state. This will help tourism marketers develop a better promotional strategy with a greater focus on those attributes of image which can attract the right tourists to the state. Besides the study will also be useful to the government and tourism stake holders to focus on building the right tourism policy for the future.

The basic objective of the paper is to explore the destination image of Goa from the perception of domestic tourists in relation to the 33 attributes of destination image which have been identified by past researchers on this topic.

Destination Image

Destination image is an important concept in tourism marketing literature. It is defined as the perceptions of tourists about a destination (Hunt, 1975, Nadeau et al., 2008). According to Choi *et al.* (1999), destination image is people's belief, idea or impression about a place. Although there are similarities between all the different definitions, this study draws from the definition which states that destination image is the sum of beliefs, attitudes and impressions that individuals hold towards a tourist destination or aspects of destination (Weaver and Lawton, 2010). Past research work on this topic has already proven how destination image is one of the most vital factors which a tourist considers when choosing a place he or she would visit. Normally, travellers have a choice of travel destinations when they consider the options of where to go for a holiday. A choice set will normally consist of 2-5 destinations (Page, 2003). In order to decide where to go travellers will make their decisions based on several criteria. One of the important criteria in the decision making is Destination image (Page, 2003). Hence a study on destination image of Goa is vital to long term sustainability of tourism in the state.

The components of Destination Image

Destination image researchers have a strong preference for structured methodologies. In fact, almost all have used either semantic differential or Likert type scales in the measurement of destination image. Because of the nature of

structured methodologies, the majority of destination image measurement studies have focused on the common, attribute-based component of destination image (Echtner, Ritchie, 2003). To illustrate this point, Fig. A, presents a summary of the attributes of destination image used to date in the studies employing structured methodologies. At one end of the dimension are functional more easily measurable attributes and at the other end are more psychological abstract attributes which are more difficult to measure. A total of 33 components of destination image have been identified based on the studies conducted by past researchers.

Psychological (Abstract)

Methodology

A survey was conducted on Domestic Tourists who were on a visit to Goa during the period of January 2016 to September 2016. The 9 month period of survey allowed responses from domestic tourists during both the tourist season of January to May and the off-season tourists visiting the state from the month of June to September. The tourists were administered a questionnaire asking them to rate the 33 identified components of destination image (Refer Fig. A). A likert scale (1-5) was used in the questionnaire where the different components of destination image were rated in terms of the extent of positive image or negative image as perceived by the tourists after visiting the state. 1- Very Negative Image, 3- Neutral and 5- Very Positive Image. The objective of the survey was to measure the destination image of Goa. A total of 715 domestic tourists participated in this survey. 106 questionnaires were rejected because of various errors in filling up the questionnaires. A total of 609 questionnaires were considered for the final analysis. The sample included 43% Female respondents and 57% Male respondents. A random 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 both North Goa as well as South Goa with a tourist breakup of 58% tourists in North and 42% tourists in South. The collected data was analysed using Principal Component Factor Analysis. This helped reduce the 33 components of destination image to a smaller set of manageable factors in order of their importance. The data was further analyzed using descriptive statistics to understand the image of the each of the components within each of the factors.

Findings

The collected data was analysed using Principal Component Factor Analysis. The result of the Kaiser- Meyer- Olkin and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity for Destination Image was 0.877 which was higher than 0.5, the result was significant ($p < 0.001$) as suggested by Hair et al (2010) and Field (2006), (Refer Fig 1). For this study factor loadings of items greater than (\pm) 0.3 were considered necessary to measure as suggested by Hair et al (2010), (Refer Fig 2). The total variance explained by the variables of destination image is 52.044% which exceeded the point suggested by Hair et al (2010). The factor analysis reduced the 33 components into 5 factors; 1) Travel Environment 2) Infrastructure and Cost 3) Entertainment, Events and Activities 4) Historic Attractions and 5) Natural Attractions.

The components of destination image which got clubbed under the factor, Travel Environment were Climatic Conditions, Customs/ Culture, Crowdedness, Political Stability, Cleanliness of Destination, Degree of Urbanisation, Economic Development, Family Oriented, Extent of Commercialisation, Opportunity for

Adventure, Personal Safety, Hospitality, Restful/ Relaxing and Atmosphere. The components of destination image which got clubbed with Infrastructure and Cost were Different Cuisines, Infrastructure, Facilities for Information and Tours, Quality of Accommodation, Cost/ Price Levels, Accessibility, Cities and Quality of service. The components which got clubbed under Entertainment, events and Activities were Night Life/ Entertainment, Sports Activities, Tourists Activities, Shopping facilities, Wilderness activities and Fares/ Exhibitions/ Festivals. The components which got clubbed under the forth factor, Historic Attractions were Buildings/ Architecture, Museums/ Historic Sites and Opportunity to gain knowledge. The fifth and final factor identified was Natural Attraction which included, Beaches and Scenery/Hinterlands. (Refer Fig. 5)

Figure-A

Functional (Physical, Measurable)



Travel Environment is the most important factor which explains 23.745% of

total variance. Infrastructure and Cost explains 10.267% of total variance. The 3rd factor; Entertainment Events and Activities explains 7.643% of totals variance. The 4th factor; Historic Attractions explains 5.455% of total variance and the final factor; Natural Attractions explains 4.934% of total variance. (Refer Fig. 3)

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.877
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	9489.968
	Df	528
	Sig.	.000

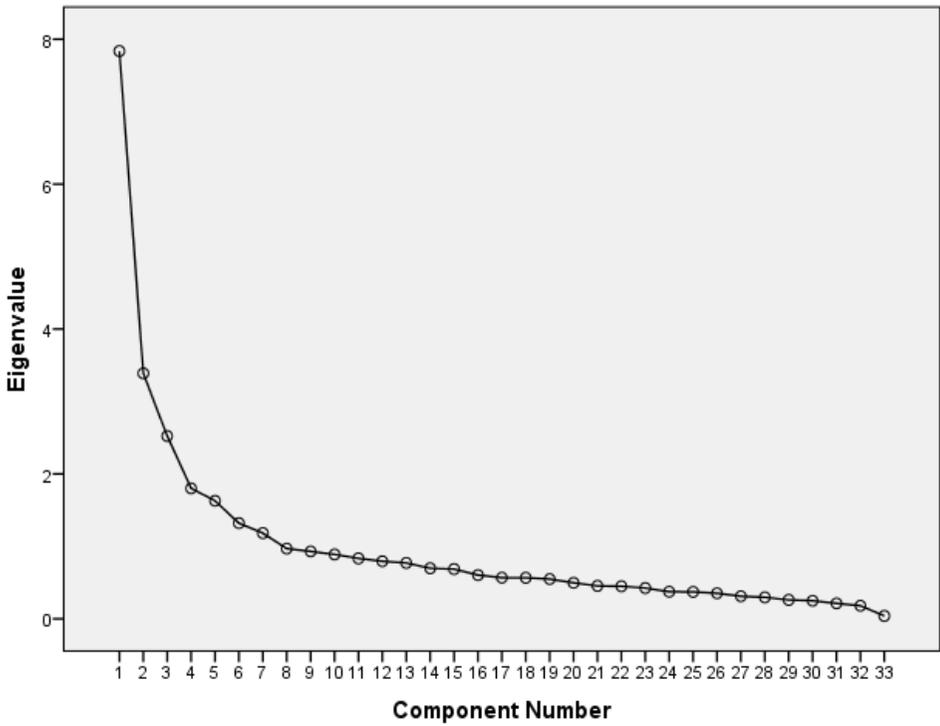
Table 1: Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
Climatic Conditions	1.000	.805
Opportunity To Increase Knowledge	1.000	.407
Restful/ Relaxing	1.000	.316
Quality Of Service	1.000	.385
Hospitality	1.000	.201
Atmosphere	1.000	.253
Personal Safety	1.000	.468
Customs /Culture	1.000	.778
Political Stability	1.000	.757
Cleanliness Of Destination	1.000	.725
Degree Of Urbanization	1.000	.698
Crowdedness	1.000	.761
Economic Development	1.000	.672
Family Oriented	1.000	.616
Extent Of Commercialization	1.000	.541
Opportunity For Adventure	1.000	.495
Beaches	1.000	.660
Scenery/ Hinterlands	1.000	.538
Nightlife/Entertainment	1.000	.703
Fares/Exhibits/Festivals	1.000	.381
Sports Activities	1.000	.509
National Parks/Wilderness/Activities	1.000	.287
Tourist Activities	1.000	.434
Different Cuisines	1.000	.546
Quality of Accommodation	1.000	.478
Accessibility	1.000	.299
Facilities for Information & Tours	1.000	.528
Shopping Facility	1.000	.297
Local Infrastructure/ Transportation Service	1.000	.521
Cities	1.000	.329

	Initial	Extraction
Museums/ Historic Sites	1.000	.639
Buildings / Architecture	1.000	.726
Cost / Price Level	1.000	.420

Table 2 : Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings	
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance
1	7.836	23.745	23.745	7.836	23.745
2	3.388	10.267	34.012	3.388	10.267
3	2.522	7.643	41.656	2.522	7.643
4	1.800	5.455	47.111	1.800	5.455
5	1.628	4.934	52.044	1.628	4.934
6	1.320	3.999	56.043		
7	1.182	3.583	59.626		
8	.968	2.934	62.560		
9	.930	2.819	65.379		
10	.888	2.692	68.071		
11	.833	2.525	70.596		
12	.794	2.407	73.003		
13	.771	2.336	75.339		
14	.697	2.113	77.452		
15	.686	2.079	79.531		
16	.603	1.827	81.359		
17	.567	1.718	83.077		
18	.566	1.715	84.792		
19	.548	1.660	86.452		
20	.496	1.504	87.956		
21	.454	1.375	89.331		
22	.449	1.359	90.691		
23	.424	1.285	91.976		
24	.373	1.131	93.107		
25	.372	1.127	94.234		
26	.353	1.069	95.302		
27	.311	.943	96.245		
28	.296	.898	97.143		
29	.261	.791	97.934		
30	.249	.753	98.687		
31	.213	.647	99.333		
32	.180	.545	99.879		
33	.040	.121	100.000		

Fig: 2**Scree Plot****Table 3 : Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis, Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.**

	Pattern Matrix	Component				
		1	2	3	4	5
1.	Climatic Conditions	.887				
2.	Customs Culture	.876				
3.	Crowdedness	.874				
4.	Political Stability	.870				
5.	Cleanliness Of Destination	.842				
6.	Degree Of Urbanization	.829				
7.	Economic Development	.817				
8.	Family Oriented	.786				
9.	Extent Of Commercialization	.737				
10.	Opportunity For Adventure	.701				
11.	Personal Safety	.646				
12.	Hospitality	.437				
13.	Restful/Relaxing	.367				.351
14.	Atmosphere	.365				

	Pattern Matrix	Component				
		1	2	3	4	5
15.	Different Cuisines		.724			
16.	Infrastructure/ Transportation		.713			
17.	Facilities For Information/Tours		.693			
18.	Quality Of Accommodation		.684			
19.	Cost Price level		.604			
20.	Quality Of Service		.554			
21.	Cities		.533			
22.	Accessibility		.530			
23.	Nightlife/ Entertainment			.828		
24.	Sports Activities			.708		
25.	Tourist Activities			.654		
26.	Fares Exhibits Festivals			.612		
27.	Shopping Facility			.516		
28.	National Parks Wilderness Activities			.509		
29.	Buildings/ Architecture				.852	
30.	Museums Historic Sites				.793	
31.	Opportunity to gain Knowledge				.584	
32.	Beaches					.806
33.	Scenery/ Hinterlands					.731

The various components belonging to each of the 5 factors identified were further analysed using descriptive statistics. Under Travel Environment which has been identified as the most important factor for tourists; the components which got a poor image rating were Crowdedness, Family Oriented and Extent of Commercialisation with mean scores closer to 3.

The image components of travel environment which got higher rating were Relaxing and personal safety with mean scores closer to 4 (Fig: 6). For the 2nd factor, Infrastructure and Cost, the image components which got a good rating closer to 4 were, Quality of Accommodation, Different Cuisines and Accessibility. The image components of the factor, Infrastructure and Cost which got a poor rating closer to 3 were Cost and Facilities for Information and tours (Fig 7).

For the 3rd factor, Entertainment, Events and Activities, the image component which scored the highest was Night Life with a rating over 4. But the image components, Fares/ Exhibitions/ Festivals and Wilderness Activities got a poor rating closer to 3 (Fig:8).

The image components of the 4th factor, Historic Attractions, which got the highest rating was historic sites with a rating close to 4 whereas the image components, Opportunity to gain knowledge and Buildings/ Architecture got a poor rating of close to 3 (Fig 9).

Both the image components of the 5th and the final factor, Natural Attractions, i.e. Beaches and Hinterlands/ Scenery got a good rating but beaches as expected got a very high rating of more than 4 and Hinterlands/ Scenery got a rating just below 4 (Fig 10).

Table 4 : Descriptive Statistics for Factor 1 (Travel Environment)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
Climatic Conditions	609	1.00	5.00	3.5616	.04144	1.02272
Restful Relaxing	609	1.00	5.00	3.7586	.04365	1.07721
Hospitality	609	1.00	5.00	3.6962	.03829	.94486
Atmosphere	609	1.00	5.00	3.4253	.04539	1.12013
Personal Safety	609	1.00	5.00	3.7077	.04177	1.03076
Customs Culture	609	1.00	5.00	3.5895	.04063	1.00277
Political Stability	609	1.00	5.00	3.4319	.03915	.96605
Cleanliness of Destination	609	1.00	5.00	3.6289	.04132	1.01965
Degree of Urbanisation	609	1.00	5.00	3.5435	.04155	1.02525
Crowdedness	609	1.00	5.00	3.3645	.03948	.97424
Economic Development	609	1.00	5.00	3.5369	.04130	1.01908
Family Oriented	609	1.00	5.00	3.2479	.04408	1.08788
Entent of Commercialisation	609	1.00	5.00	3.1691	.04852	1.19730
Opportunity for Adventure	609	1.00	5.00	3.4253	.04639	1.14482
Valid N (Listwise)	609					

Table 5 : Descriptive Statistics for Factor 2 (Infrastructure and Cost)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
Quality of Service	609	1.00	5.00	3.5961	.04306	1.06270
Different Cuisines	609	1.00	5.00	3.9787	.03764	.92899
Quality of Accommodation	609	1.00	5.00	3.9737	.04110	1.01435
Accessibility	609	1.00	5.00	3.8818	.04156	1.02557
Facilities for information and tours	609	1.00	5.00	3.3777	.04528	1.11740

Local Infrastructure Transport	609	1.00	5.00	3.5731	.03927	.96909
Cities	609	1.00	5.00	3.5681	.03831	.94540
Cost Price Levels	609	1.00	5.00	3.1445	.05132	1.26653
Valid N (Listwise)	609					

Table 6 : Descriptive Statistics for Factor 3 (Entertainment, Events and Activities)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
Night Life Entertainment	609	1.00	5.00	4.1281	.03447	.85071
Fares Exhibitions Festivals	609	1.00	5.00	3.4466	.05281	1.30316
Sports Activities	609	1.00	5.00	3.7307	.04228	1.04333
National Parks Wilderness Activities	609	1.00	5.00	3.3087	.05345	1.31912
Tourist Activities	609	1.00	5.00	3.6404	.04330	1.06857
Shopping Facilities	609	1.00	5.00	3.5222	.04584	1.13116
Valid N (Listwise)	609					

Table 7 : Descriptive Statistics for Factor 4 (Historic Attractions)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
Opportunity to Gain Knowledge	609	1.00	5.00	3.1067	.05285	1.30413
Museums Historic sites	609	1.00	5.00	3.7947	.03381	.83444
Buildings Architecture	609	1.00	5.00	3.4351	.04852	1.19737
Valid N (Listwise)	609					

Table 8 : Descriptive Statistics for Factor 5 (Natural Attractions)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
Beaches	609	1.00	5.00	4.1445	.02871	.70860
Scenery Hinterlands	609	1.00	5.00	3.7307	.03718	.91752
Valid N (Listwise)	609					

Analysis:

For a tourist, Travel Environment is the most important factor of destination image. In this factor the components of destination image for Goa which got a poor rating were Crowdedness, Family Oriented and Extent of Commercialization. For Goa to position it-self as a high end tourist destination it has to work on building facilities and activities for tourists who travel with their families. Besides building facilities it has to convey it through its promotions to potential family tourists. In recent years a huge emphasis on nightlife and entertainment has taken precedence over how Goa is promoted which has effectively attracted a large number of youngsters but has created this image of Goa not being ideal for family travelers.

The other aspect which is perceived poorly in terms of its image is the crowdedness of Goa. This is not surprising considering the huge growth of tourists in such a short period. There is obviously a need to focus on quality over quantity. Goa's image in terms of the extent of commercialization, which is again a component of the factor, Travel Environment has also taken a beating because there are an increasing number of tourists who feel cheated, whether it's the taxi fares, the room rentals or the rates of various tourist activities. The government has work out a mechanism to ensure that tourists are not fleeced in the name of commercial activity.

The second most important factor, i.e. Infrastructure and Cost has two components of image for which Goa fares poorly. The first is Cost aspect of Goa, which most tourists perceive to be too expensive. It's important for stake holders of tourism in Goa to look into this aspect. Critics of Goa tourism have often pointed out that the seasonal rates of flight tickets to Goa and hotel rates of stard hotels in Goa are higher than some of the other international tourist destinations like Thailand, Bali and Sri Lanka.

High prices have to be backed by quality infrastructure and facilities for tourists. The second component of this factor which suffers from a poor image is the Facilities for Information and tours. This issue is not that grave considering the options tourism marketers have today with the boom in internet connectivity and use of smart phones. Tourism marketers need to move with time and have a more prominent online presence. Besides the official website, effective use of social networking websites and tools like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram is the need of the hour to stay connected with travelers. Launching an effective Goa travel application for smart phones will also be a step in the right direction.

In the third factor, i.e. Nightlife, Events and Activities it comes as no surprise that the component of image which performs the best is Nightlife and Entertainment. Goa over the last decade has become famous for its nightlife attracting a large number of young tourists. But the same can't be said about the way the various festivals/ fares/ exhibitions are promoted. Also in spite of having a substantial forest cover and wildlife this component of image also fares poorly in this factor. There is a need to promote and highlight this aspects of Goa instead on just focusing on the night life. If developed and promoted more effectively this can attract more family tourists to the state. Similarly for the fourth factor, i.e. Historic Attractions, image component like Historic sites are rated positively, thanks to a more effective promotion of heritage sites like Old Goa the same can't be said about image component, Buildings and Architecture which performs poorly in spite of Goa boasting of some prominent buildings of old Portuguese architecture. Again this is an issue of not effectively promoting this aspect of Goa. As far as the fifth and final factor, i.e. Natural attractions is concerned, the image component that performs the best is Beaches. Goa has built its tourism industry around the scenic beaches and this comes as no surprise but the other aspect of natural attractions, Hinterlands can be promoted more effectively.

Conclusion

Goa has issues within the factors, Travel Environment and Infrastructure/ Cost with destination image aspects like Crowdedness, Family Oriented, Extent of Commercialization, Cost and Facilities for Information/ Tours suffering from a relatively poor image. Both these factors require the government and tourism stake holders to work together on the new tourism policy. Numbers do not tell the real picture of tourism in Goa. While it can be boasted that domestic tourism has grown exponentially in Goa over the last 3 years. This doesn't necessarily show the picture in its entirety.

A large number of tourists enter Goa in vehicles, sleep in these vehicles instead of booking a hotel room, cook their own food instead of eating at restaurants and defecate in open. Such tourists add to numbers but are tourism killers in the long run. How to keep away such tourists who just add to crowd and strain the limited infrastructure is a major policy decision the tourism stake holders have to take. How to improve the tourism infrastructure in Goa to make it more attractive to family tourists and also make it cost competitive where travelers don't feel like they are being fleeced. This requires the attention of the government and tourism stake holders on priority.

As far as the remaining 3 factors, i.e. Nightlife/Events/Activities, Historic Attractions and Natural Attractions are concerned there is a need for Goa to look beyond just promoting the Beaches, Nightlife and Historic Sites. Other aspects like Festivals, Buildings/ Architecture, Wildlife and Hinterlands also need to be promoted effectively. This will not require any major policy changes and can be done more easily with a more wholesome promotional strategy.

For an average tourist, the image of Goa still revolves around beautiful scenic beaches and a buzzing nightlife. For tourism to sustain in the long run there is a need to look beyond mass tourism and focus on high end tourism. This could mean, lower number of tourists but could also high spending tourists.

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