

Impact Factor :
SJIF 2016 : 6.177

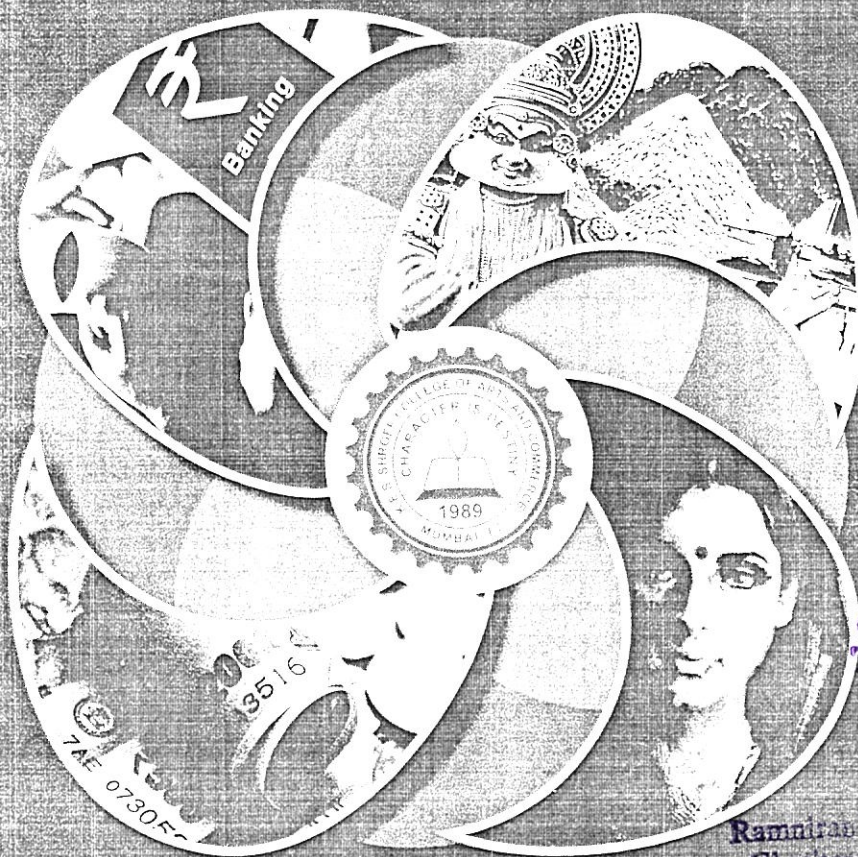


ISSN 2278-8808

Special Issue of an International
Scholarly Research Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies

Kandivli Education Society's
**B. K. SHROFF COLLEGE OF ARTS &
M. H. SHROFF COLLEGE OF COMMERCE**

NAAC Re-accredited with 'A' Grade (CGPA 3.27) • ISO 9001 : 2008 Certified



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Interdisciplinary National Conference on
Economics, Banking & Finance &
Social Sciences - 2016

**TRANSFORMING KONKAN TO CALIFORNIA THROUGH TOURISM:
A DELUSION OR A REALITY?(CASE STUDY OF HOTELIERS AND B&B SCHEME
OWNERS IN SINDHUDURG DISTRICT)**

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INTRODUCTION: Tourism is one of the driving sectors of economic growth of many countries in the twentieth and twenty first century. It is, therefore, aptly called as 'engine of growth' in many developing countries.

Tourism leads to following benefits to the economy:

1. Generation of foreign exchange;
2. Creation of new job and employment opportunities;
3. Stimulation of trade, income and entrepreneurship;
4. Provision of infrastructure for non - tourism use;
5. Increased regional development - particularly in underdeveloped regions;
6. Greater tax revenue leading to possibility of increase in public expenditure;
7. Cascading of new money through multiplier effect

With these benefits of tourism in view, India and the state of Maharashtra have made several attempts to promote tourism. The state of Maharashtra is gifted with variety of flora and fauna, historical heritage monuments, a wide stretch of serene beaches as well as forts for adventures. Naturally, Maharashtra deserves to be preferred as a tourists' destination by domestic as well as foreign tourists. One of the divisions of Maharashtra which is endowed with natural beauty and has potential to attract large number of tourists is Konkan Region. Konkan is a hilly region with heavy rainfall. It is predominantly agrarian by nature. Paddy is the main crop. Agricultural activities are only for few months of the year. Remaining part of the year people are unemployed. Problem of seasonal unemployment persists in this region. Out migration of youth from this region to metropolitan cities especially Mumbai is grave. Since tourism is highly labour - intensive by nature, it can be a remedy on multiple economic problems of this region. In its recent Tourism Policy 2015, Government of Maharashtra announced various initiatives for tourism development in the state. One among them was announcement of Sindhudurga District as "Special Tourism Zone". Similarly, government has expressed its keen interest in organizing "Mango Festival" in Ratnagiri for attracting tourists. Government also has announced establishment of Special tourism development corporation for Konkan region i.e. Konkan Tourism Development Corporation very soon. (Loksatta, 12th April, 2016) Thus, it becomes relevant and timely to study present situation and prospects of tourism development in Sindhudurg District.

SCOPE The present research paper is mainly based on the primary data collected from Six tourists' destinations from Sindhudurg district namely Tarkarli, Devbaug, Malvan, Vengurla, Sawantwadi and Amboli. Each of these destinations has its peculiar tourists' attractions. Tourism is a multi - stake holders' activity. It involves stake holders such as hoteliers, tourists, tour operators, local residents as well as government. The focus of this paper is on Hoteliers and Bed and Breakfast Scheme recipients as the stakeholders of tourism.

OBJECTIVES

The paper aims:

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- i. To explore problems and challenges faced by Hoteliers and Bed and Breakfast Scheme recipients from these destinations while providing tourism services;
- ii. To suggest concrete ways to overcome challenges faced by the stakeholders and overall tourism development in Sindhudurg District

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY This paper is a case study of tourism development in Sindhudurg District. *Primary data* is the major source of data of this paper. *Survey method* supported by questionnaire and interview techniques is used for data collection. *Stratified random sampling method* is adopted for selection of sample. Size of the sample is 25.

ABOUT SINDHUDURG DISTRICTS Sindhudurg is an administrative district in the state of Maharashtra in India, which was carved out of the erstwhile Ratnagiri District. The district headquarters are located at Oros. The district occupies an area of 5207 km² and has a population of 849,651 of which 12.59% were urban (as of 2011). As of 2011 it is the least populous district of Maharashtra out of its 39 districts. The 8 talukas of this district are Devgad, Kankavali, Malvan, Kudal, Sawantwadi, Vengurla, Dodamarg and Vaibhavwadi. Sex Ratio of Sindhudurg: In 2011 census, child sex ratio is 922 girls per 1000 boys compared to figure of 944 girls per 1000 boys of 2001 census data. (Census 2011) Literacy Rate of Sindhudurg: Average literacy rate of Sindhudurg in 2011 were 85.56 compared to 80.30 of 2001. In terms of gender, male and female literacy were 91.58 and 79.81 respectively. (Census 2011) Economy: Sindhudurg district is primarily agrarian by nature. Major Crops are Rice, Coconut, Kokam, Mango, Cashew. 74% of total land holding in the district are held by small and marginal farmers. The irrigated area is only 23.48% through well and small channels. (<http://sindhudurg.nic.in> - Sindhudurg District Website of Government of Maharashtra) Two Major projects of irrigation are Tilari and Talamba along with four medium projects. Fisheries are another major occupation of the region with the sea coast length 121 km and fishing area 1600 km. Main Fisheries Centers are Vijaydurg, Devgad, Achara, Malvan, Sarjekot, Kochara, Vengurla and Shiroda. In the last few years tourism is developing as a significant source of occupation.

ABOUT BED AND BREAKFAST SCHEME (B&B Scheme) The Scheme Bed and Breakfast/Homestay Establishments of the Ministry of Tourism is voluntary in nature. The main objective of the scheme is to give a feel and an experience of local culture, traditions and lifestyle of Maharashtra to the tourists from abroad as well as to the domestic tourists. Economic impact of this scheme is generation of income to the owners of the houses under this Scheme. The vacant parts of their houses will generate income as well as self - employment to them and other locals. As per MTDC records, there are 220 B&B Scheme recipients registered as on August 2017 in Sindhudurg district. The rooms provided under B&B Scheme are categorised into different 'Star' categories such as silver, gold, diamond by the MTDC Officials after minute scrutiny of the facilities provided. Out of the three, Diamond is supposed to be the best service providers from the given B&B recipients. B&B Scheme Recipients pay a nominal fee to MTDC as registration fee in the beginning. In return, MTDC allows them to use a Logo and banner of MTDC on their houses. Secondly, the name of these B&B Scheme recipients is included free of cost in the list published by MTDC on their website. It automatically, gives publicity to B&B Scheme recipients and at the same time gives choice to the tourists to select their accommodations.

DATA ANALYSIS Responses of all the sample units highlight serene and quite beaches as the most important strength of Sindhudurg district as tourists' destination. Secondly, local cuisines popularly called as "Malvani Food" as the next attraction for the tourists to visit this region. Sindhudurg, still, is a low - cost destination as compared to Goa as well as safer for the tourists in every sense. Water sports, snorkelling and scuba diving in Tarkarli and Devbaug area also are the added attractions for the tourists. Culturally Sindhudurg is perceived as a safe and pure place in comparison with Goa.

The above-mentioned strengths of Sindhudurg district have led to increase in income as well employment in the region. Income is generated directly through tourism as well as indirectly by way of backward linkages. For example, due to increasing number of hotels and B&B owners, direct employment is generated in the capacity of managers, waiters, room boys etc. directly recruited in these units. With growth of these units, demand and thereby expenditure on the necessities like vegetables, non-veg. grocery is rising. Laundries are getting more business. These are some of the indicators of backward linkages generated due to tourism in this region. People buy souvenirs, gift articles like wooden toys from Sawantwadi or some special food products (e.g. Malvani Khaja) from Malvan. These are pointers to forward linkages of tourism. In spite of the advantages Hoteliers and B & B Recipients are facing challenges at various levels as well as in different aspects while running their business. The survey conducted has brought out some issues that are generally faced by the entire Sindhudurg district, while others were found to be "destination specific".

- All 25 sample units have stated that even if Sindhudurg is announced as 'Tourism District', government has not taken many initiatives to develop tourism in this region. Information about new schemes and changing rules and regulations is not properly disseminated to the stakeholders. Due to such inadequate information Hoteliers as well as B & B are suffering. Like any other policy and programme framed by the government, tourism schemes have remained effective only on the paper and are not implemented in practice, so there has been a huge gap between policy and its implementation.
- Tourism policy, 2006 assures the stakeholders of either exemption from certain taxes or taxes at minimal rates. According to Tourism Policy, 2006, basic amenities such as water, electricity would be taxed at industrial rate. However, a common response of all the respondents to this question is they are still paying water and electricity bills at commercial rate which is higher than the industrial rate.
- These stakeholders have expressed concern over apathy of political leaders of all political parties towards development of tourism in this sector.
- MTDC is the main administrative unit in implementing government decisions. B & B scheme is fully controlled by MTDC. Granting B & B Licenses as well as their renewal lies in the hands of MTDC. MTDC charges nominal fees for this. B & B scheme owners have expressed that MTDC does not help them in getting tourists. Their claim is that MTDC only advertises its own hotels and resorts but sufficient advertisement of B & B scheme properties is not done. Thus, MTDC is not helping the locals in earning livelihood. 10 sample units have expressed this concern during the survey.
- 3 respondents have expressed dissatisfaction over cap on rents of rooms under B & B Scheme. They also have expressed their disappointment about present cap on number of rooms that can be rented under this scheme. Currently the limit is of maximum 5 rooms per property or 10 beds per property.
- One of the respondents has raised a very serious issue of frequently changing government rules. He stated that hotels are a long-term investment involving huge sum of money. If government changes rules in this erratic manner hotels are definitely going to suffer loss and future investment in this sector would be affected negatively. He gave an example of ban on restaurant and bars in 500 meters from the Highway. Hoteliers who have already invested their money in restaurants and bars in the vicinity of highways already incurred expenditures on development of such properties.
- Staff Retention is the biggest challenge that is faced by Hotel owners. Waiters, Chefs take on – the – job training in hotels of Sindhudurg district. Immediately they get offers from the hotels in

neighbouring state Goa for higher wages and salaries. Therefore, retaining experienced staff in this region is a big task for hotel owners and B & B Scheme owners.

- Problems of Infrastructure-
 - ✓ Acute shortage of water and availability of electricity are found in all the tourists' destinations visited. Peak season of tourism for Sindhudurg district is mainly summer i.e. March to May. However, in the same period there is acute shortage of water and electricity experienced by the hotels and B & B owners. As a solution in some places people are using water tankers. But this solution is temporary as well as very expensive. It is hampering the business of these stakeholders. In Tarkarli, it is reported that during the Month of May the water from the well becomes salty and hence could not be consumed.
In many properties, there is a facility of generators or battery back - ups. However, it is observed that electricity is so short in supply that even the generators or battery back - ups cannot be charged to supply electricity.
 - ✓ Bad roads and traffic jams seem to be a very common problem in the spots surveyed in the present study. Respondents from Tarkarli, Devbaug and Amboli have especially reported this problem. Absence of signboards on the roads are reported by all the respondents.
 - ✓ People who do not come by their private vehicle find it difficult to get a vehicle for travelling from Kudal to Tarkarli, Devbaug area. Very few buses are running on this route right now.
 - ✓ Access road to beach is another problem for all the beaches in this area. These roads are so narrow that a car cannot reach near the beach. Secondly, there are no sign boards indicating a way towards the beach.
- Safety of Beaches- There is no lifeguard on any of the beaches in Sindhudurg. It is fatal to the lives of the tourists. Electricity lights are not provided on the beaches becoming a serious problem during dark. This adds to the already existing risks of the beach.
- Waste collection and its disposal is another serious concern in all the tourists' destinations in Sindhudurg district. Local governing bodies have neither provided any facility of a garbage truck to collect the waste from the village nor is there any dumping ground for final collection and disposal of waste. It takes a serious shape especially during peak season of tourism.
- Coastal Regulatory Zone (CRZ) issue of Tarkarli and Devbaug- Tarkarli and Devbaug are suffering from a peculiar problem of CRZ. Both these villages entirely come under CRZ Regulations. Government has asked the natives to migrate to some other area. However, there are discussions going on between residents and the government. Meanwhile, since the villages come under CRZ, government is not giving sanctions and permissions for hotels and B & B Schemes in this area. It is imposing fines and penalties for breach of law on Hotels and B & B scheme owners. Also the government will not be paying any compensation during the period of any natural disaster like Tsunami. Another aspect of this problem is many financial institutions have refused to sanction loans to the residents of this area due to the CRZ issue.
- Availability of medical facilities- It is reported that in both Devbaug and Tarkarli, not a single hospital or a dispensary is available. For a very common medicine also one has to travel few kilometres.
- Sawantwadi Bypass highway to Goa and its impact on tourism- A new highway to Goa bypassing Sawantwadi is developed recently to make journey to Goa convenient for the tourists. But it has negatively affected tourism and wooden toy industry in Sawantwadi. Even the hotel business is severely affected in Sawantwadi since tourists prefer to reach Goa directly without risk of traffic jams in Sawantwadi.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING TOURISM IN SINDHUDURG DISTRICT The responses sought from the major stakeholders covered in this study, namely hoteliers and B & B scheme operators, have lead to a list of suggestions including varied and comprehensive aspects facilitating tourism.

1. Dissemination of information to all the stakeholders of tourism industry is a foundation of development of this sector. Government should organise camps for creating awareness among the stakeholders about new government schemes as well as changing rules and regulations.
2. Good and wide roads should be the priority for development of tourism in Sindhudurg District wherever possible. For widening of roads especially in the small villages like Tarkarli and Devbaug, natives should be taken into confidence and convinced about giving their lands for fair amount of compensation from the Government.
Water route between Kudal and Devbaug should be developed. It will save time of travel as well as will give a distinct experience to the tourists.
Increasing number of State Transport Buses from Kudal to Devbaug will attract more tourists in this area.
3. Adequate drinkable and consumable water is another prerequisite of tourism development. Similarly, continuous supply of electricity, especially in the summer (which a peak period of tourism in this area) is a must. So provision should be made by the government in this regard. System of waste collection and waste disposal from Local Bodies should be arranged. It would definitely add to the overall appearance and hygiene of the tourist destinations in Sindhudurg District.
4. New airport should be developed to attract foreign tourists to this area. Residential and eating facilities also should be generated in that area.
5. Tourists spots have to be developed keeping tourists' need as the priority. For example, changing rooms, toilets on the beaches are a must. It will automatically attract tourist to this area. Beaches should be maintained clean by arranging for waste disposal system. Lights on beaches are required urgently. Watch towers and Life guards on each beach will improve safety on the beaches creating positive impact on tourism inflow in this region.
6. Special tourism packages for local site seeing in Sindhudurg are not designed by MTDC as well as Private Tour operators. It is suggested that one Day Package of water route from Nerurpar to Walawal, Amberi, Devbaug Sangam can be designed. This would benefit the tourists by availing the facilities at a lower rate while giving them a very novel experience. Local cultural programs can be included as a part of tourist package.
7. Development of Shilpagram, Ayurveda Panchkarma Kendra in Sawantwadi would attract tourists to this place compensating the loss incurred due to Sawantwadi by – pass Goa highway.
8. Developing new tourists' spots also is necessary. Flowers of 'Karvi' should be marketed like Kaas Plateau near Satara to attract tourists.
9. B & B Portal should be updated at regular intervals. It will keep B & B lists up- to- date.
10. Hospitality Training Institutes and Human Resource Development Institutes should be established for generation of employable skills and thereby, generating employment among local residents. It is also suggested by the hotels and B & B Scheme owners that local human resources should be given priority for employment in various tourism related businesses.
11. Tax exemptions and tax concessions to hotels will attract more investment in this region leading greater income and employment generation. For making these businesses lucrative provision of water and electricity at concessional rate will be helpful.

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12. At present, Sindhudurg District has predominantly medium scale hotels. So mass tourism is prominently found in this area. However large hotel properties are yet not found in this area. Affluent tourists still prefer Goa over Sindhudurg since Goa is far more developed than Sindhudurg in terms of facilities available. Since wealthy tourists are not visiting Sindhudurg, big investments in hotels are not attracted in this region. This vicious circle has to be broken by the Public -Private Participation.
13. All the hotel owners and B & B scheme owners have strongly urged that participation of the tourists in maintenance of cleanliness and safety and security is immensely important. So along with the awareness among locals, awareness among tourists also is the need of the hour.
14. Lastly, Konkan should be marketed as "tourists' Destination" very strongly by the Government since it has a very intense competition from the neighbouring state of Goa which has reached a developed stage while Konkan in general and Sindhudurg in specific are still in stage of "infancy" in terms of tourism development.

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSION Lack of co-ordinated efforts of all concerned government departments is one of the root causes of low tourism development in Sindhudurg District. Tourism is a sector involving multiple sectors and varied government departments. Participation of all these departments while framing tourism policy is a prerequisite for its successful implementation. However, due to lack of consent to various proposals in Tourism Policy, 2006 it is implemented half-heartedly. For e.g. In Tourism Policy, 2006, Ministry of Tourism, Government of Maharashtra had announced availability of electricity at industrial rate to stakeholders in tourism industry. However, actually the stakeholders have not reaped any benefits since MSEB does not have any notification to this effect. Tourists' Destinations in Sindhudurg district should be developed as one "cluster" and not as each other's "competitors". Tourist attractions should be developed in such a way that they will complement each other and diverse activities and attractions will emerge in this sector. For example, if Tarkarli already has snorkelling and other water sports then other beaches of the same region should offer different attractions to tourists. This 'cluster' approach will enable the destinations in Sindhudurg district not to compete with each other but become collectively better equipped so as to be more competitive and reap larger benefits.

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