

Addressing Safety Issues In Adventure Tourism In Goa- An Operators Perspective

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Paper abstract: Goa a tiny state on the west coast of India with natural scenic beauty and attractive beaches has carved a niche in the world of Travel and Tourism. Goa is now taking a forward leap in adventure tourism. There has been a growth in adventure tourism, with large numbers of tourists seeking novel, challenging and exciting adventure experiences while on holiday. This has resulted in a rise in adventure tour operators catering to this ever-increasing demand, with a wide range of commercialised activities.

This paper evaluates the operating practices of Adventure tour operators. It throws light on the safety issues in adventure tourism, based on the empirical data collected from 50 tour operators in Goa State. From the study it is evident that addressing safety issues is important for adventure tour operators for sustainability of adventure tourism in the State of Goa. A more detailed study that develops and refines safety measures for the wellbeing of tourists and adventures tour operators can be undertaken.

Key words: Adventure Tourism, operating practices, safety issues

1. Introduction

Adventure tourism is a niche segment that is fast evolving in India and recorded a growth of over 20% in the last few years. It has the potential to turn into mainstream tourism in India in the near future. It is projected to be one of the major foreign exchange earner for the country with expected revenues of US \$ 20 billion (Rs 90,000 crores), provided the potential is fully exploited. Soft adventure is rapidly gaining popularity in India and is valued at approximately Rs 300 crores according to the Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOI).

Goa is one of the most sought-after tourist destinations in India. This second smallest state of India attracts lakhs of domestic and foreign tourist annually. Although Goa joined mainstream tourism only after 14 years of the country's independence, tourist traffic to Goa registered such a phenomenal growth of that from two lakh tourist in 1975 the figure has shot up to 80.15 lakh in 2018 of which domestic tourist comprise 70.81 lakh and foreigner account for 9.33 lakh.

Adventure tourism activities in Goa are among the most favoured activities of tourist with land and water sport being the most popular among adventure sports in Goa. An array of soft & hard adventure activities are available across the state and are becoming increasingly popular among domestic tourist and international tourist. The adventure activities are classified into air, land and water on the bases of their nature and functions. A number of tour operators have made this niche segment as their sole business and their numbers are proliferating by the day. As such, there is an increasing emphasis on the safety and risk management of adventure tour operations. However serious accidents and fatalities can cause dramatic drop in the participation of tourist for the entire activity and country concerned, not merely the particular operator. This indicates that all operators must follow a standard set of safety practices for adventure operations. There is a need for introduction of more formal procedures and

safety measures to protect clients and ensure minimum safety standards. Uniform safety guidelines for adventure tour operators will rule out inconsistencies in safety standards.

1.1. Objectives

1. To assess safety measures provided by operators in adventure tourism in Goa
2. To examine the opinion of adventure tour operators with regards to safety of tourist.

1.2 Research Methodology

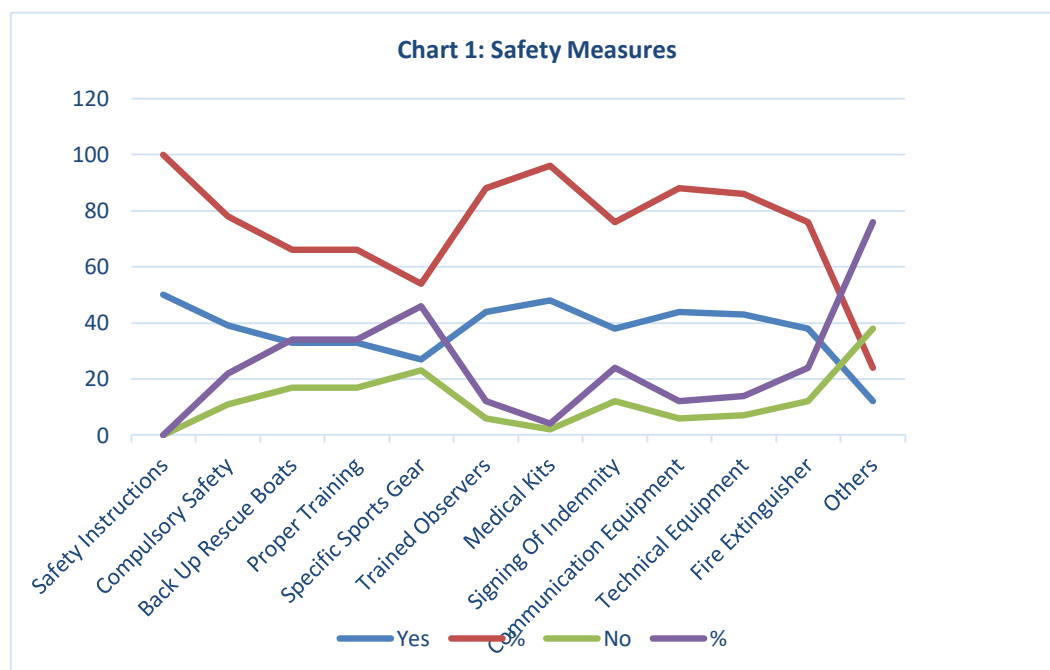
For accomplishing the research objective both primary and secondary data were collected. The primary data was based on personal survey of a predetermined sample size of 50 tour operators in Goa state. The empirical data has been collected to understand the safety issues in adventure tourism in Goa. Since Goa is divided into two districts, North Goa and South Goa, the number of respondent to be selected from each district was decided using quota sampling, accordingly 25 respondents each from North and South Goa were selected. The secondary data was collected from published sources comprising of journals, magazines, newspapers and websites and also research dissertation available in various libraries, archives and Tourism facts and figures were also procured from Tourism Department published data.

2. Data Analysis

The primary data collected from the respondent's was processed by using appropriate statistical tools and the statistical findings derived from this exercise have been interpreted through an intellectual exercise against the theoretical background for the purpose of drawing conclusions.

2.1 Safety measures for Tourist

There is an increasing emphasis on the safety and risk management of adventure tour operations. There is a need to introduce safety measures to protect tourists and ensure minimum safety standards. Safety guidelines for adventure tour operators should be introduced uniformly.

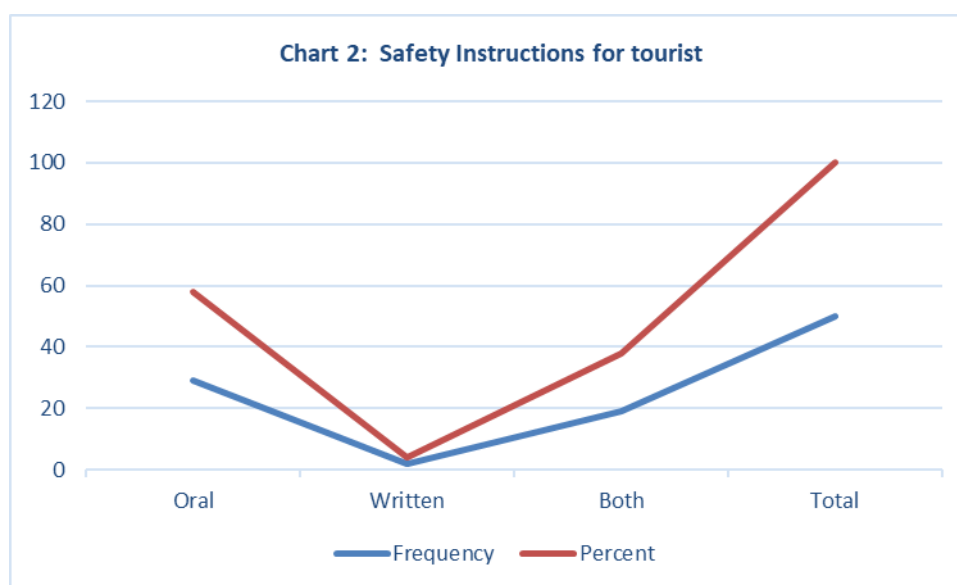


The Chart 1 clearly reveals that all tour operators provide safety instruction to the tourist, maintain medical kits, ensure that a trained observer accompanies a participant and that proper technical and communication equipment's, fire extinguishers, rescue boats, and specific sports gear if required is also

arranged for. Most operators stated that participants have to sign an indemnity bond prior to participation in adventure activities.

2.2 Safety Instructions for Tourist

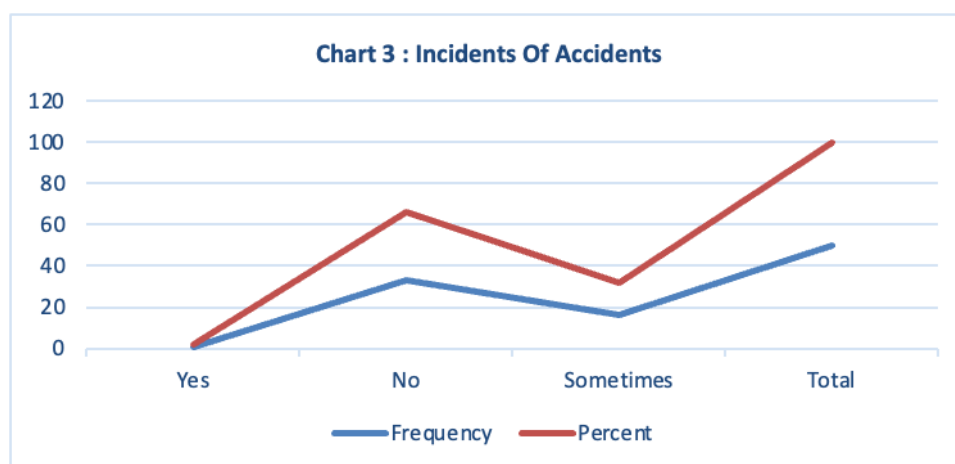
Formal procedures of providing safety instruction to participants ensure that some safety and risk management procedures are being exercised by the operators. The Chart 2 provides tour operators' responses about safety instruction provided to participants.



It is evident from Graph 2 that majority of the operators provide safety instructions orally to the participants. In the absence of standard guidelines each of the operators has designed their own risk reduction and safety methods.

2.3 Incidents of Accidents

Any accident in adventure tourism proves to be fatal, especially if it is on account of ineffective safety systems. Chart 3 provides details of accidents and fatalities that an operator may have experienced.



The Graph 3 clearly reveals that majority of the operators have agreed that no incidents of accidents have occurred till date while conducting adventure operations. This is because in the business of hospitality and adventure there is no scope for even a single mistake. As you will not only lose your

clientele but also future business and also other penalties. So all precautionary measures are taken to ensure that no accidents take place.

2.4 Practices of Reporting Accidents

Negative publicity associated with adventure tourism accidents can have a serious impact on the operator's reputation as well as on Goa's image as an attractive tourism destination. As such all efforts are to be made to minimise the risk of accidents. Chart 4 provides details of practices followed by operators for Reporting Accidents.

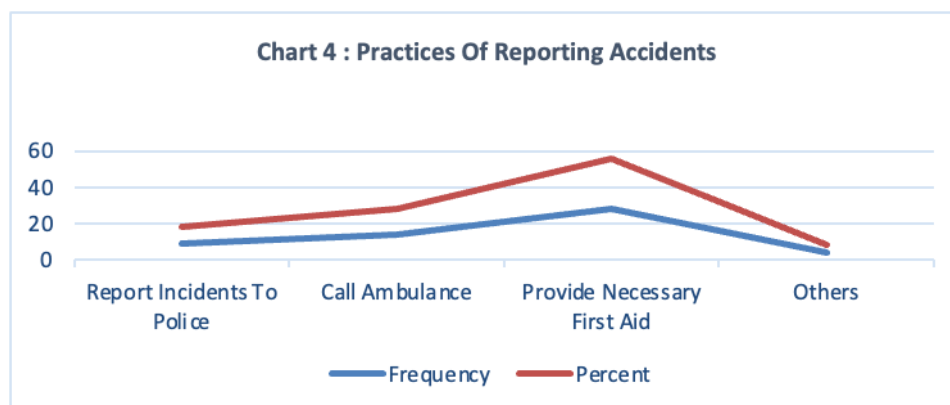


Chart 4 states the measures adopted by tour operators to record and report incidents including near misses, the chart reveals that of the 50 operators, 56% stated that necessary first aid is provided, 28% stated that an ambulance is called for, 18% stated that they report the incident to the police, while 8% stated other measures like ensuring that there are doctors handy, they file in the Company reports, in the case of diving they report such incidents to PADI.

Chart 4 reveals that 56% of the operators provide first aid in case of accidents. It is evident from the table that majority of the operators provide first aid to the participant in the case of accidents.

2.5 Causes of Accidents

Adventure activities face risk of accidents; these accidents are classified as Technical, Natural, Human and Operational Causes of Accidents.

Chart 5 Causes of Accidents

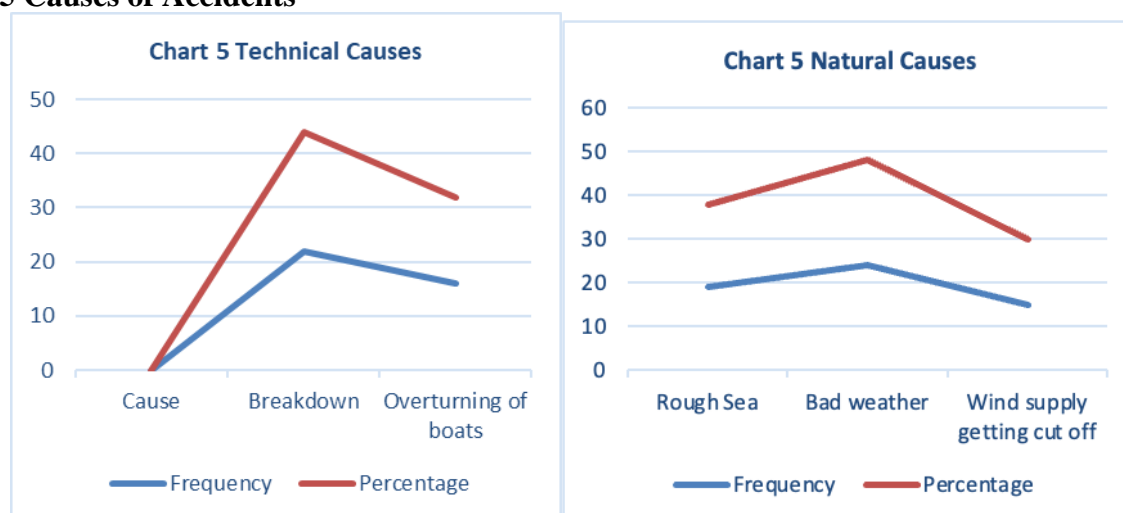




Chart 5 reveals that in case Technical factors, 44% stated that breakdown of boats, machines, engines is a major technical cause of accidents, 24% stated bad weathers has a major natural cause of accidents, 26% stated negligence of operators,, 34% stated overcrowded beaches and operations are close to swimmers and bathers, which endangers the lives of tourists are a major operational causes of accidents

2.6 Preventive Measures to Minimum Accidents

Necessary precautionary measures are initiated by tour operators, Department of Tourism, Captain of Ports, and other Departments.

By the Organization: As far as the tour operators are concerned majority stated that they ensure that maximum care and safety measures are followed, namely, not to operate when the weather is bad or sea is rough, check all equipment, ensure that life jackets are provided, in case of water sports activities, proper attire and strictly no alcohol, also utilising services qualified and trained staff.

All activities are closely monitored and carried out under complete supervision and by observing the safety guidelines. Also, for some activities manifesto are prepared in advance to match each participant. In the absence of standard guidelines each of the operators have designed their own risk reduction and safety methods.

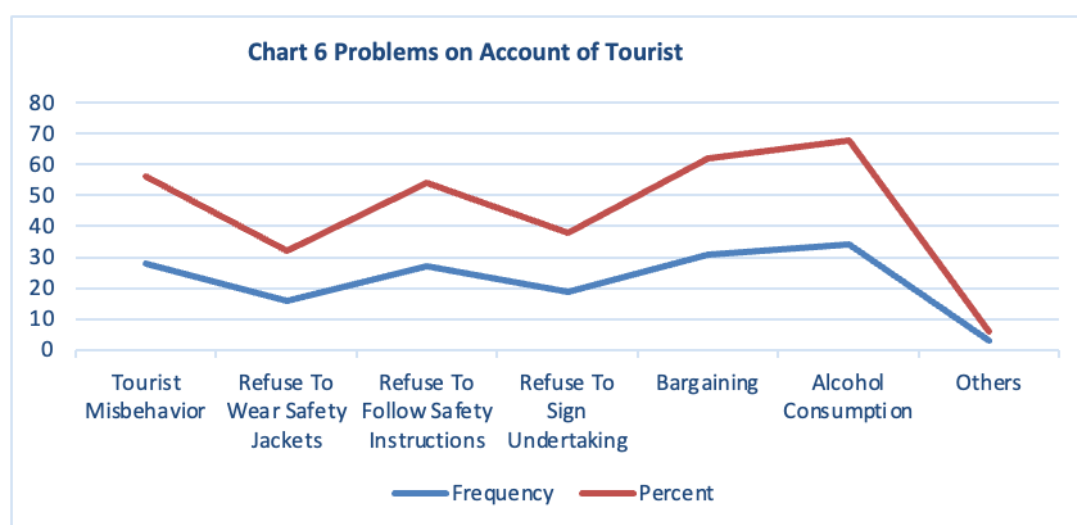
By the Department of Tourism: The Department of Tourism has engaged the services of Drishti Special Responses Services Pvt. Ltd. to ensure safety and security of tourist on beaches as such life

guards are deployed in most popular beaches of Goa. Also tour operators need to register with Department of Tourism under the Tourism Trade Act 1982 and acquire license to commence operations related to tourism.

By Captain of Ports: Captain of Ports is responsible for issuing licenses as well renewing licenses for all water based activities which used motorized boats. COP inspects vehicle, issues licenses, also penalises erring operators by suspending licenses.

2.7 Problems Experienced on Account Of Tourist

Tour operators experience major problems on account of tourist in their adventure tour operations. Chart 6 provides operator views of the problems encountered in adventure tour operations on account of tourist.

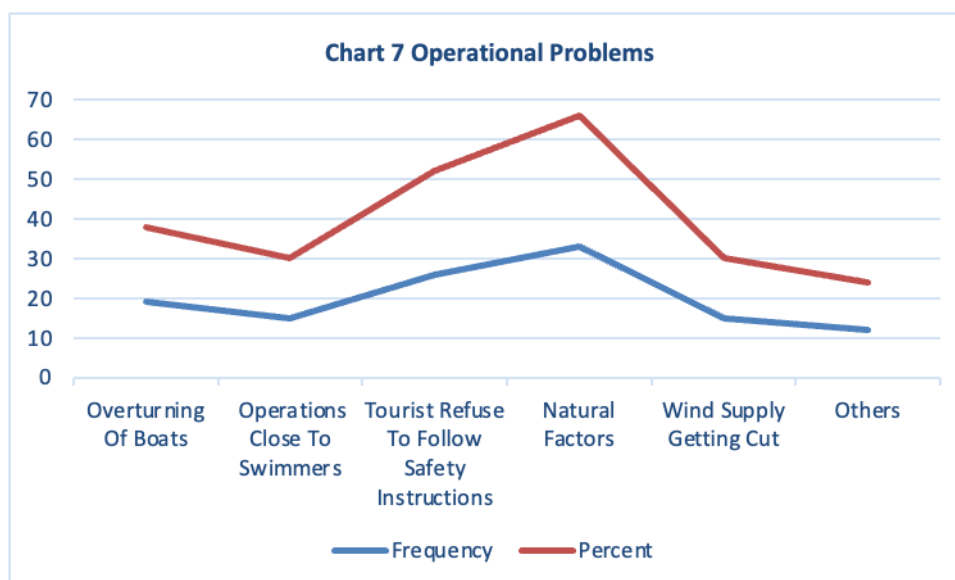
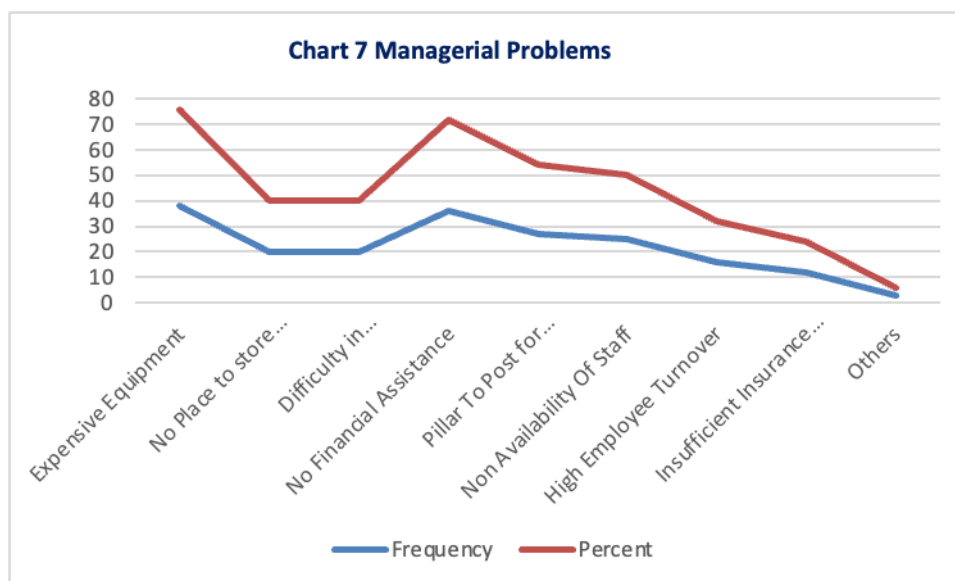


The above chart reveals that of the 50 operators, 68% stated alcohol consumption by tourist as a common problem encountered, 62% stated bargaining, 56% stated tourist misbehaviour, 54% stated refusal to follow safety instruction of the operators / life guards, 38% stated that tourist refuse to sign undertaking prior to participation in adventure activities. 32% stated that tourist refuse to wear safety jackets. 6% stated other problem like disturbance to natural habitat by loud music, operate jet skis without trained person accompanying them. The above table indicates that 68% of the operators stated alcohol consumption by tourist is a major problem which they experienced. The main complaint about tourist is alcohol consumption. Majority of the operators agree that consumption of alcohol by tourist is a major problem that they witness while operating adventure tour operations. In such cases majority of the operators refuse the tourist and prevent them from participating in adventure activities and also impose penalties where possible.

2.8 Managerial and Operational Problems

Tour operators experience major problems in the Management and Operations of adventure activities. Chart 7 provides overview of the Managerial and Operational problems encountered by operators.

Managerial Problems: The Chart 7 reveals that with regard to managerial problems, 76% stated expensive equipments, 72% stated absence of financial assistance, 54% stated running from pillar to post for clearances of license from various authorities, 50% stated non availability of skilled manpower, 40% stated that they have no place to store equipments, and difficulty in transporting boats and other equipments, 32% stated high employee turnover, 24% stated insufficient insurance cover, and 6% stated other reasons like lack of infrastructure for adventure activities especially water sports, absence of marinas and short season for business.



Operational Problems: In case of operational problems, 66% stated natural factors such as bad weather / rough sea, 52% stated tourist refusal to follow safety instructions, 38% stated overturning of boats in case of water sports activities, 30% stated that in the case of parasailing and paragliding, wind supply getting cut off is a common problem, and 30% stated that water sports operate close to swimmers and bathers, 24% stated other reason like, conflicts with competitors, high cost of fuel to run boats, breakdown of machines / engines, high maintenance cost, overcrowded beaches, lack of Government support, varying water / river levels, non-availability of suitable dive centres. The chart reveals that 76% stated expensive equipment as a major management problem and 66 % stated natural factor as major operational problem. It is evident that expensive equipment is a major managerial problem and natural factors are a major operational problem faced by operators.

3. Findings

1. The Chart 1 reveals that all tour operators provide safety instruction to the tourist, maintain medical kits, ensure that a trained observer accompanies a participant and that proper technical and

communication equipments, fire extinguishers, rescue boats, and specific sports gear if required is also arranged for

2. It is evident from Chart 2 that majority of the operators provide safety instructions orally to the participants. In the absence of standard guidelines each of the operators has designed their own risk reduction and safety methods.
3. The Chart 3 reveals that majority of the operator have agreed that no incidents of accidents have occurred till date while conducting adventure operations.
4. Chart 4 reveals that majority of the operators provide first aid to the participant in the case of accidents
5. Chart 5 reveals that breakdown of boats, machines, engines is a major technical cause of accidents, bad weathers is a major natural cause of accidents, negligence of operators, overcrowded beaches and operations close to swimmers and bathers, endangering the lives of tourists are a a major operational cause of accidents
6. Chart 6 reveals that majority of the operators agree that consumption of alcohol by tourist is a major problem that they witness while operating adventure tour operations.
7. Chart 7 reveals that expensive equipment is a major managerial problem and natural factors are a major operational problem faced by operators.

4. Suggestions

The principal objective of tour operators should be to facilitate a positive experience such that tourist's wellbeing is assured. Adverse experience may pose a major problem for adventure tour operators and their business. Adventure tour activities involving high degree of risk requires proper safety management. All practicable efforts should be made to minimise the risk of accidents and to safeguard the interest of the tourists

5. Conclusion

Through this paper it can be concluded that accidents in adventure tourism are not adequately document. This indicates a major gap in the research. Despite the deficiencies in the data collected for this study it is clear that addressing safety issues is important for adventure tour operators for sustainability of adventure tourism in the State of Goa.

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