CHAPTER – 5

5.5 TOURISM

5.5.1 Preamble

In the North Western tip of Gujarat lies Kutch - the biggest district in India in terms of sheer area. What makes Kutch so interesting is the great variety of land and water, plain and hill, desert and fertile land. All this has resulted in a variety of ecosystems close to each other.

The Rann of Kutch is the most distinctive geological formation in Kutch. The Rann of Kutch essentially saline mud flats that occupy Kutch district and parts of southern Pakistan, dissect Kutch in to Great Rann of Kutch which lies to the north and the little Rann of Kutch to the East. The great Rann of Kutch covers an area of about 18,000sq.km. and lies almost entirely in Kutch district, along the border of Pakistan. The little Rann of Kutch on the other hand extends northeast from the Gulf of Kutch and occupies about 5100sq.km. in Gujarat state.

Millennium star "MR. Amitabh Bachchan" is a brand ambassador of Gujarat tourism and "Kutch Nahi Dekha to Kuchh nahi Dekha", a slogan given by Millennium Star becomes a famous slogan frequently coming in to the TV advertisement in a big scale. Kutch is now becomes the preferred tourist
destination due to advertisement and "Rann-utsav" which is usually celebrated by the state Government every year for about two month during the month of December and January.

Bhuj, the district headquarter has an Airport. Bhuj has three flights daily from Mumbai.

Bhuj and Gandhidham are two major junctions on this route. Bhuj and Gandhidham are connected by broad gauge line from Mumbai and Ahmedabad. There are many trains connecting Gandhidham with rest of India.

Kutch has well connecting roads all over the district. The district headquarter Bhuj is connected with all major cities of Gujarat by road. Other major cities like Gandhidham, Anjar, Bhachau, Rahpar etc are also connected by road. The state transport buses and private luxury coaches connect Bhuj and Gandhidham with various centers of Gujarat. Other smaller centers are connected with district headquarter Bhuj
5.5.2 Rann Utsav, Banni Grasslands, Flamingo City and Mangroves

“Kutch Nahi Dekha to Kuch Nahi Dekha” a famous slogan given by a millennium star Amitabh Bhachchan has done a miracle for tourism industry. Kutch usually celebrates the Rann Utsav for two months in the months of December and January. Rann Utsav is a very famous and unique experience and it has got an international attention of the tourist flows. It becomes very difficult to get good hotels and rooms nearby Bhuj during the two months. Hotel room occupancy is almost more than 90% during the said period.

Ecological tourism is an important aspect of the industry. Kutch provides extremely unique ecological regimes creating vast potential in this sector. The Great and the Little Rann of Kutch and their associated features such as Banni Grasslands are unique physical features in the world.

The Great Rann of Kutch is a unique geomorphic feature with an identical ecology. It is a massive low lying area with 18,130 sq. km of land mass; a saline desert and a flat land formation with alluvial and colluvial silt and sand deposits. It merges with the Thar Desert of Pakistan and Rajasthan in the north and surrounded by Banaskantha district in the east, the Little Rann of Kutch in
the south-east, Banni Grass lands and Kala Dungar in the south and Kori Creek in the Arabian Sea in the west. The Great Rann has thirteen islands in it and seasonal inundation by rain water and diurnal inundation by sea water, coupled with a high inherent salt content of the soil are the major characteristics. Leaving the islands or the raised lands and for a few highly salt tolerant halophytes like Suaeda spp. and Atriplex spp., etc the Rann is devoid of any vegetation.

The Little Rann of Kutch is the southward extension of the Great Rann and is very similar in physiography, edaphic conditions, eco-climate and vegetation. It has 23 small islands and an area of 5180 sq. km. Little Rann, however is different from the Great Rann in terms of inundation regime. It serves as a nursery during the monsoons for many marine animals and fishes including prawns. It is also the last home of endemic Asiatic Wild Ass, *Equus hemionus khur*, locally called *Ghorkhur* normally found in the islands.

Banni Grass lands are ecologically disguised grass lands with very sparsely distributed small settlements. It is about 3000 sq. km. flat but slightly raised newly formed land. Silt deposition and receding of the sea are two main reasons of its formation. Today, a land locked mangrove of some fifty odd ‘Cher’ (*Avicinnia marina*) trees in the southern border of Banni is the sole evidence of the ancient shoreline, and indicates that Banni is mainly a benthic silt deposition exposed due to the receding of the sea. Though a very flat land having a gradient as low as 1 in 6000 to 1 in 10,000, it is slightly raised towards north. In the south towards the mainland, it forms a depression which gets inundated during monsoon, forming a saline desert once the water gets evaporated. The raised lands are good grasslands though some of these are occupied by exotic *Prosopis julifera*, *Suaeda fruticosa*, *Suaeda nudiflora*, etc are the pioneer species. *Urochondra setulosa*, *Sporobolus diandrus* are salinity tolerant grasses.
and later in the successional stages are palatable grasses and Fabaceae plants such as Cenchrus setigerus, Crotolaria spp. And Indigofera spp. colonises. These grasslands are providing a good habitat for Chinkara, Nilgai, Reptiles and Birds of prey. Wolf and Jackals are the main predators. In the south, low lying areas experiencing seasonal inundation provide breeding site to many migratory birds. The Banni is inhabited by a community called Maldhari, which is a traditional livestock breeder community. The villages in Banni area are famous for traditional Kutchi huts called Bhunga and embroidery by women.

Flamingo City the marshes of Kutch are only known breeding grounds for flamingos in India. In a cycle of once in a decade, when favourable condition prevails, plenty of flamingos breed in islands of Great Rann, following a good rainfall. These can be seen in Dhand, in Banni, which is accessible by 48 hours journey on camel though marshy land.

Moreover, around 293 sq. km. of area in the western Kutch is covered by mangrove forests. Main species of these mangroves are Avicinnia marina, Rhizophora mucronata and Ceriops roxburghiana. Mangroves are extremely useful ecosystem as they provide breeding ground for many marine animals and some of which have high commercial value products. They also prevent coastal erosion and high turbidity, which results in an environ-suitable for survival of marine life.
5.5.3 Dholavira, the Planned Harappan Urban Settlement

With the discoveries in Dholavira potential of Kutch for archaeological, historic and research based tourism has increased up to a great extent. But yet the site has not attracted tourists in large-scale due to lack of publicity, proper documentation and related infrastructure facilities.

The Archaeological Survey of India has been conducting large scale archaeological excavation since 1990 at Dholavira located in the island of Khadir in the salty marshes of the Great Rann of Kutch. The 123.5 acres site has revealed advanced town planning, monumental as well as aesthetic architecture, an ingenious water harvesting system, the finest stone dressing, sophisticated technology, funerary architecture, lapidary and shell working, copper smithy and ceramic industries. The evidences suggest a nearly continuous habitation from about 2900 to 1500 B.C in Dholavira and there are traces of strong trade linkages with their contemporary Mesopotamians. The pride of place goes to the inscription of signboard comprising ten Harappan large sized letters painted on a wooden board in the citadel's north gate, and to the recent finds of a headless stone monitor lizard, seals, sealings copper implements, stone beads, large reservoirs one having a damaged flights of 50 steps and another rock cut one are among the finds of extraordinary significance in the Harappan context.
The settlement had an extensive and remarkably sophisticated water supply system that included finely chiselled reservoirs, wells and rainwater tanks. A third of the city's 50 hectares was devoted to the collection and distribution of fresh water. Planners developed the city on a slope, between two streams that even now run after a rainstorm. At the point where one of the streams meets the city walls, Dholavira's inhabitants carved a large reservoir out of the rock. This was connected to an intricately engineered complex of large (the largest measuring 263 feet by 39 feet and 24 feet in depth) and small reservoirs that provided the entire settlement with a year-round supply of water. The giant reservoirs together held more than 325,000 cubic yards of water. These reservoirs were connected to wells that filled cisterns for drinking and bathing. A 4.25-m-wide well, the largest ever found in a Harappan ruin, leads through a spill channel into the citadel itself.

Similar to Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, Dholavira traces a parallelogram, encircled by a stone-and-brick wall 5 m thick at its base. Inside, the wall of the citadel is 18.5 m thick, while the so-called ‘middle town’ with spacious homes suggesting occupation by well-off traders, had its own fortification. A developed public space nearly 300 m by 50 m edges the citadel; Archaeologists hypothesise it to be a multi-purpose sports stadium, assembly arena and occasional bazaar. Farther out, a more densely packed colony of houses adjoins the middle town. Beyond the walls, yet another settlement has been found. The city was a vibrant place. Most walls, roads, floors, and possibly even building roofs were likely constructed of pink-and-white clay. The well-preserved site has offered up a trove of Harappan artefacts--pottery, clay figurines and animals, beads made from lapis lazuli, gold, silver and shell, and the objects most associated with Harappan digs: weights and seals depicting bulls, unicorns and other beasts. In addition to these, excavations in a cemetery west of the city
have uncovered tombs, idols, and ritual objects belonging to ethnic groups that practiced a variety of religious rituals.

Around 2100 B.C. the culture began to show signs of decay: the citadel was abandoned, building repairs displayed shoddy workmanship and houses encroached on the well-planned streets. By around 2000 B.C. the city was abandoned, to be partially rehabilitated nearly 100 years later. The quality of artisanship crumbled still further, producing weights made not only of stone but also of pottery fragments. After abandoning it again the city appeared to be reoccupied around 1500 B.C., this time by rural folk who lived in circular houses similar to ones built by villagers today. About 50 years later, the site was abandoned for good. Scientists believe that floods and earthquakes may have doomed most of the civilization. As for Dholavira itself, experts believe that the disruption of trade with war-torn Mesopotamia chipped away at the city's economy, even as rapidly increasing aridity forced a return to a simpler lifestyle.

A wonderful and sophisticated town planned 4000 years ago is not only pride for India, but is an asset for the whole world. It is a milestone in the human civilization and an important heritage site. Dholavira therefore, in addition to normal tourists, can create immense interests for city planners, architects, civil engineers, archaeologists, geographers and for various professionals world-wide.
5.5.4 Bhuj, a Historic City and the District Headquarter

Bhuj is a historic city, presently a C class city is the district head quarter of Kutch. The city surrounds a hillock known as Bhujia Hill with an old fort a top and has typical physical settings. The high-density historic city surrounded by walls was developed adjacent to the hillock with a manmade lake. In the 19th and 20th century, the city expanded towards south and east. Many of the landmark buildings built in the British Period are found scattered outside the historic old core city. Important buildings of tourist importance are Aina Mahal, Pragmahal Palace, the Sharad Baug Palace, Royal Cenotaphs (Chatris), Kutch Museum, Ethnology Museum and Bharatiya Sanskriti Darshan complex etc. Aina Mahal is a royal palace built in the 18th century while Pragmahal Palace was designed as an elegant Italianate palace. Kutch Museum is the oldest museum in Gujarat. Aina Mahal, Kutch Museum, Chatris have been major tourist attracting places, which have suffered severe damage during the earthquake of 2001.

An Urban Development Plan for Bhuj has been prepared and adopted through government procedures during the post earthquake reconstruction period. New development control regulations were formulated and adopted to support it. Later on detailed land pooling schemes in the severely destroyed and congested old areas has been also prepared. Subsequently a massive up gradation of utility infrastructure with state of the art drinking water treatment and supply, underground sewerage system, roads development and up gradation, a new solid waste management system, new relocation colonies, etc has been carried out.
Implementation of the urban development plan and the town planning schemes and the urban infrastructure development project is substantially changing city’s physical appearance with wider roads, new earthquake resistant buildings and with opening up of huge amount of land for future development. Simultaneously a massive amount of investments has been injected in upgradation of social infrastructure facilities inclusive of few state of the art hospitals and newly constructed schools and colleges. A new Kutch University is also being established in the city which also has the potential of developing the city’s image as a centre of educational activities and research. With all these, Bhuj is undergoing a massive and unprecedented transformation creating a lot of tourism potential.

But poor traffic management and a lack of street level planning in the few of the older roads such as in the Bus Stand Road gives an anarchic and dirty impression of the city. Lack of landscaping, cycle and pedestrian friendly environment, greenery and recreational facilities are the major hurdles to portray the city as a very attractive tourist destination.
5.5.5 Mandvi, its Beaches and Palaces

Mandvi is situated 60 km south of Bhuj and approximately 100 km west of Gandhidham. The town was founded in 1581 A.D. by the rulers of Kutch and was a historic harbour. The port of Mandvi was an important sea trade port between the near east and the far east, and brought considerable prosperity to the royal family of Kutch. The sailors of Mandvi were known to be adventurous and it is said even Vasco Do Gama used a sailor from Mandvi to navigate to Zanzibar. As most of the top ports of India were controlled by Europeans, especially the Portuguese, even the Mughals held the Maharaos of Kutch in high esteem, as they needed the port of Mandvi for exports, imports and for pilgrimages to Mecca. Mandvi town was therefore as important to the Maharaos as their capital city of Bhuj and they endowed it with some splendid palaces and buildings.

The famous Aina Mahal of Mandvi, built in the mid-18th century by Ram Singh, who had been ship wrecked in Europe, learnt the arts of foundry, glass blowing, stone carving etc in the Dutch and Venetian tradition, and was patronized by the Maharao Lakhpat Sinhji of Kutch, is no longer as grand as the same sort of extravaganza they created in Bhuj, having been converted into a college for girls, but still has interesting sculpture of Dutch sailors and dancing girls. The Vijay Vilas palace, erected in the 1940s, with splendid architectural
features such as umbrella domes and cupolas of the Rajasthani and Bengali styles consort with Gothic arches and Baroque features.

There are few good and virgin beaches in the town. Apart from the popular beach in the town, where wind mills have been planted, there is also a two kilometre long private beach of the Maharao with beautiful white sands accessible with a minimum fee. Next to the beach are the docks where wooden ships are being built. There is also a large private sanctuary of the royal family known as Pragsar.

In the town, one can visit numerous old buildings of princely times. The Rukmavati Bridge in its entrance is the longest stone bridge; built in 1883 A.D. Mandvi is well known for handicraft industry particularly for its relief, filigree and enamel work. One can pick up handicrafts such as silverware, shell-work, Kutchi embroideries, bandhini tie-and-dye saris and block prints.
5.5.6 Lakhpat, Koteshwar and Narayan Sarovar

Lakhpat, Koteshwer and Narayan Sarovar situated in the extreme western part of the country are important religious destinations and surrounding areas also have potential of ecological tourism.

Lakhpat is situated in the Kori Creek, approximately 135 km from Bhuj. It was named either after Rao Lakha or many Lakhpatis (millionaires) residing there in the peak days of its glory. There are many temples and dargahs inside the Lakhpat fort, which is 500 year old. It has one Gurudwara and as per popular believes Gurunanak made his sojourn to Mecca from it.

Koteshwer and Narayan Sarovar are located 183 km west of Bhuj and are famous for the lake and temples, which are sacred as per Hindu belief. Mata-no-math on the way to Koteshwer is a very popular religious destination in Gujarat.

Moreover, the Chinkara Sanctuary located in the proximity to Narayan Sarovar is the home of the Chinkara (Gazella gazelle) of the Indian Gazelle and Naliya/Lala Sanctuary is famous for the Great Indian Bustard. Jhakhau with views of the mangroves and natural lagoons is a small port in proximity.
5.5.7 Gandhidham, Kandla and Mundra

Kutch has great potential of port based and business tourism, which has not been sufficiently exploited yet. The state of the art ports, Kandla and Mundra and rapid development of Gandhidham near Kandla can act as catalysts for development of port based, business and urban-recreational tourism.

Moreover, Bhadreshwar, located 25 km west of Gandhidham, nestles ruins of the ancient town of Bhadrawati. A famous Jain temple of 10th century is also located there. Anjar 15 km from Gandhidham is famous for Jesal Toral Tomb and there is also a museum for Kutchi art.

5.5.8 Kutch as a Jurassic Park!

Valuable Jurassic and post Jurassic fossils are also being collected from Kutch. The region had been an attractive habitat of dinosaurs and other extinct animals, birds and plants in various geologic time periods. Out of more than 10,000 dinosaur eggs found and documented in India the Kutch region itself has yielded more than 2,000 of such eggs. At personal levels dinosaur fossils and eggs are being collected and even there is a private museum of such kind in Kutch. Geologists have even found pugmarks embedded in the land, and plant and elephant fossils, which suggest that the now arid desert of Kutch was once a
dense forest complete with rivers and they also believe that desertification in the region started due to tectonic activity taken place around 10,000 years ago.

Moreover, the extinct volcano Dinodhar, which is the highest point in Kutch, 2300 years old Nani Rayan Excavation site, camel breeding farm at Wandh, Fossil Farm at Vithan, etc have potential of being good tourist spots in future.
5.5.9 Major Attractive Tourist Spot

5.5.9.1 Aina Mahal (Old Palace)

This is a beautiful museum, built in the 18th century as the palace of Maharao Lakhpatji. It has a Hall of Mirrors with white marble walls covered with mirrors and gilded ornaments; the floor is lined with tiles with a platform above it surrounded by a series of fountains. The room also has a chandelier of Venetian glass. It lies in the old part of the city, in a small, fortified courtyard and houses some very rare idols. However, the recent earthquake has destroyed most of this elegant palace.

5.5.9.2 Kutch Museum

The oldest museum in Gujarat, it was established in 1877, originally known as the Fergusson Museum, named after its founder, Sir James Fergusson, a governor of Mumbai under the British rule. The exhibits on display are gold and silver ornaments, Kshatrapa inscriptions, textiles, weapons, archaeological finds, stuffed animals and musical instruments. Besides these, it is equipped with a picture gallery and
sections for anthropology and shipping. The recent earthquake has destroyed a part of this museum.

5.5.9.3 Prag Mahal (New Palace)

Constructed in 1979, the Prag Mahal is a magnificent building made of ornate Italian marble and sandstone. Its Corinthian pillars and Jali work depicting European flora and fauna are worth observing.

5.5.9.4 Cenotaph Complex

A popular site is the cenotaphs complex at Chattradi. These are built of red stones. Of all the tombs here, the largest and the finest is the one of Rao Lakha built in 1770 AD. It is polygonal in shape with balconies and an intricately carved roof. Other impressive cenotaphs are the ones of Rao Rayadhan, Rao Desai and Rao Pragmal. The recent earthquake has destroyed most of the chattradi.
5.5.9.5 Lakhpat
Lakhpat is situated 135 km. from Bhuj on the Kori creek. It is named after Rao lakha but it could also have been named so because of the many Lakhpatis, millionaires residing there in the heyday of Lakhpat's glory. The Lakhpat fort houses many Temples, Dargahs, and a Gurudwara from which, as popular belief goes, Gurunanak made his sojourn to Mecca.

5.5.9.6 Koteshwar and Narayan Sarovar
Famous for their lake temples sacred to Hindus, Koteshwar is at a short distance from Narayan Sarovar & 215 Kms. from Bhuj. It is an ancient place of pilgrimage. The existing temple is situated on a high plinth overlooking the sea. It is a breathtaking sunset point.

5.5.9.7 Bhadreshwar
It has a famous Jain temple dating back to the tenth century. It is located on the ruins of the ancient city of Bhadravati.

5.5.9.8 Anjar
Anjar is mainly known for the samadhi (tomb) of Jesal Toral, and the bungalow of James Mcmurdo, which is a veritable museum of Kutchi Art. Places worth visiting are the Ajaypal Temple, the Holy Shrine of Pinjora Pir. Anjar is also famous for its block printing work, nutcrackers, scissors and penknives.
5.5.9.9 Mandvi

Mandvi, (about 75 km from Bhuj), founded in 1581 A.D. is an ancient seaport. It is well known for its production of handicraft items particularly its relief, filigree and enamel work and its virtually unspoilt sea beaches. The Rukmavati Bridge (the longest stone bridge built in 1883 A.D.) and the Vijay Vilas palace are the major tourist spots at this destination.

5.5.9.10 Wild Ass Sanctuary

Gujarat is as famous for its large wild ass herds as it is for its lions. To protect these rare animals, a sanctuary covering an area of over 4,953 sq. km was created to offer protection to more than 2,100 wild asses inhabiting this area.

5.5.9.11 Chinkara Sanctuary

A few kilometres away from the Narayan Sarovar is the Chinkara Sanctuary. It is about 210 km from Bhuj. This sanctuary is the home of the Chinkara or the Indian Gazelle.

5.5.9.12 Marshes of Kutch

The marshes of Kutch are the only known breeding ground for flamingos in India. In a cycle of once in a decade, when conditions are favourable, flamingos descend in thousands to breed on islands in the Great Rann. After a good monsoon rainfall, one can hope to sight these majestic birds in Dhanda, in Banni. Flamingo city, near Kala Dungur, (48 hours camel journey through slush and marshes), is a breath taking sight to watch thousands of flamingo’s with their young ones.
5.5.10 Fairs and Festivals

5.5.10.1 Rann Utsav

GITCO Ltd. is the state public sector agencies responsible for the development of tourism in Gujarat. In Kutch, They organize “Rann Mahotsav” every year to attract international tourists. It’s a unique experience of white desert with very big tent city and so many cultural activities and historical representation. It is now a preferred tourist destination due to its uniqueness.

5.5.10.2 Dhrang Fair

The fair is held every year during February - March in Dhrang, 40 kms from Bhuj at the Samadhi (tomb) of Menkan Dada who served the community with great dedication.

5.5.10.3 Ravechi no melo

Ravechi fair is held on every Bhadrapad end i.e August-September in Rav village at Ravechi Mata's temple.
5.5.10.4 Kutch Mahotsav
The Tourism Corporation of Gujarat Ltd. (TCGL) organised this unusual tour of Kutch, in response to the request of many who wished to visit an area quite different from urban India. This tour was called a Mahotsava, or great festival, because of the great variety of sights and scenes that are offered to visitors. The Mahotsava consists of a six-day tour of Kutch, in which all requirements of the visitors are taken care of. The Kutch Utsav comprises six heady days of travel, entertainment and cultural exposure: virgin sea beaches, inscrutable desert lands, breathtaking landscape, thriving wildlife, bird sanctuaries featuring exalted species such as the flamingo, soul-stirring littoral tracts, historic monuments, forts and palaces, pilgrim centres.

5.5.10.5 Navratri Fair at Mata no Madh
Navratri fair is held twice a year at Mata no Madh (100 kms from Bhuj), during Chaitra (March-April) and Aso (Sept – Oct). The Aso Navratri fair is held for 9 days and attracts about 25,000-30,000 visitors daily.

5.5.10.6 Nakhatrana Fair
Three day fair at Nakhatrana in July is a major attraction marked with cultural highlights.

5.5.11 Tourist Flow at Individual Destination
There is a significant jump in tourist inflow. Tourist inflow at business destination in year 2005-06 was 2.7 Lacs per year. Tourist inflow statistics of Business, eligious and Leisure centres for the year 2011-12 to 2013-14 are given in Table No.: 5.5.11.1 to Table No.: 5.5.11.3
Table No.: 5.5.11.1 Tourist inflow at Business destinations for the year
2011-12 to 2013-14

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<td></td>
<td>YEAR</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>2012-13</td>
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<td>Bhuj</td>
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<td>Mundra</td>
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(Source: GITCO Ltd.)

Chart No.:5.5.11.1 Tourist inflow at Business destinations for the year
2011-12 to 2013-14

![Tourist Inflow at Business Destinations for the year 2011-12 to 2013-14](chart.png)
Table No.: 5.5.11.2 Tourist inflow at Religious destinations for the year 2011-12 to 2013-14

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<td>YEAR 2011-12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Narayan Sarovar</td>
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<td>Mata Na Madh</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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(Source: GITCO Ltd.)

Chart No.: 5.5.11.2 Tourist inflow at Religious destinations for the year 2011-12 to 2013-14
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF KUTCH AFTER EARTHQUAKE OF 2001 AND ANALYTICAL STUDY OF MAJOR GROWTH AREAS AND SELECTED INSTITUTIONS

Table No.: 5.5.11.3 Tourist inflow at Leisure destinations for the year 2011-12 to 2013-14

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(Source: GITCO Ltd.)

Chart No.: 5.5.11.3 Tourist inflow at Leisure destinations for the year 2011-12 to 2013-14

Tourist inflow at Leisure destinations for the year 2011-12 to 2013-14

No. of Tourists

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<th>Year 2013-14</th>
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<td></td>
<td>99,675</td>
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(Mandvi)